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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 8 May 1997

Jeudi 8 mai 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 8 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 mai 1997

*The House met at 1002.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MEDICINE AMENDMENT ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MÉDECINS

Mr Kwinter moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, 1991 /
Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les
médecins.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant
to standing order 96(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for
his presentation.

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): Bill 126 is
elegant in its simplicity but profound in its impact on
health care in the province of Ontario. I would like to
just read into the record the 67 words that make up the
bill. It says:

"A member shall not be found guilty of professional
misconduct or of incompetence under section 51 or 52 of
the Health Professions Procedural Code on the basis that
the member practises a therapy that is non-traditional or
that departs from the prevailing medical practice unless
there is evidence that proves that the therapy poses a
greater risk to a patient's health than the traditional or
prevailing practice."

That is the total bill. What does it do? It provides that
doctors — and I want it absolutely understood, we're
talking about doctors only, licensed physicians — shall
have the opportunity of taking a look and prescribing
alternative forms of treatment without fear of discipline
or being found incompetent by the regulatory authorities.

This may sound to some as somewhat of a radical
departure, but I want to quote from a major article in the
Fraser Forum, the publication of the Fraser Institute,
which is certainly not by any stretch of anyone's imagin-
ation a radical institution.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Read it.

Mr Kwinter: I'll be happy to read it. It's written by
Cynthia Ramsay and it's called Freedom of Choice in
Health Care. The thing that I found interesting that I
would really like to put into the record and draw mem-
bers' attention to is this:

"Licensed medical practitioners who choose to practise
complementary medicine are fulfilling an important pub-
lic need that is not currently being met by the Canadian
medical establishment. The medical licensing boards are

using their near monopoly control over the provisions of
medical service in Canada to restrict the choice of both
the suppliers and the consumers of these services. In
doing so, they are acting in direct opposition to the
World Health Organization's 1989 Helsinki agreement
signed on behalf of Canada, and therefore, by definition,
on behalf of the provinces and territories by the Minister
of Foreign Affairs at the time."

This agreement contains the following subsection and,
colleagues, I want you to know that this particular
subsection, put into force in the Helsinki agreement in
1989, is exactly the provisions that are included in my
bill. The subsection says:

"A registered practitioner shall not be found guilty of
unbecoming conduct, to be found to be incapable or unfit
to practise medicine or osteopathy solely on the basis that
the registered practitioner employs a therapy that is
experimental, non-traditional or departs from prevailing
medical practice, unless it can be demonstrated that the
therapy has a safety risk unreasonably greater than the
prevailing treatment."

The definition of the bill that I introduced last week
and is being debated today is exactly that.

One other province — and I'd like my colleagues to
really listen to this, because hopefully we can do the
same thing. Alberta has already enacted such legislation.
Bill 209, a private member's bill promoted by Alberta
MLA Roy Brassard to provide citizens with a greater
degree of choice in health care, passed third reading in
the Alberta Legislature on April 24, 1996. This bill
allows Alberta doctors to perform any alternative therapy
provided that it cannot be proven to do more harm than
conventional drug and surgical treatments. That bill was
given first, second and third reading on the same day.
That gives you an idea of the sort of support that's out
there.

Similar legislation has already been enacted in Alaska,
Colorado, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Washing-
ton and, as I've said, Alberta.

How does this apply to Ontario? It's interesting to note
that four new groups were given status as probationary
sections by the OMA board of directors at its March 5
meeting. The Ontario Medical Association has approved
sections in sleep disorders, GP, psychotherapy, comple-
mentary medicine and chronic pain physicians. So the
Ontario Medical Association has recognized complemen-
tary medicine as viable, as an alternative form of
treatment.

I would like to enter into the record a letter sent to me
by the chair of the complementary medicine section of
the Ontario Medical Association. This chair is Linda
Rapson and she says:

"As chair of the complementary medicine section of the Ontario Medical Association, I wish to congratulate you for bringing Bill 126, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, 1991, before the Legislature."

She talks about the number of doctors who are represented and says, "We are convinced that the sort of protection for Ontario physicians provided by the bill is urgently needed to ensure that all Ontarians receive safe, beneficial and cost-efficient treatment." It's signed by Linda M. Rapson, MD, who is chair of that section.

When you think about complementary medicine, you should know that a study by someone I've known for many years, Dr Merrijoy Kelner, who is a professor emeritus at the University of Toronto Institute for Human Development and Aging, found that more Canadians are trying alternative medicine, and most of these will still consult their family physician. This is critical, because the family physician is the one who is being addressed in this bill. We are not talking about people outside the practice of medicine. We're talking only about those who are licensed practitioners.

Statistics Canada says that 3.3 million Canadians visit non-traditional practitioners, and the number continues to grow. The reason they've turned to these options is that they are looking for help for chronic problems that haven't responded to mainstream treatment. Most patients opted for this type of treatment after hearing from others who have had results as a result of these treatments. Another major reason for choosing other options is concern about the effects of drugs or surgery; 40% of those surveyed said they believe alternative therapy is more natural and safer.

Interestingly enough, in the United States, a study that was done by Dr David Eisenberg, co-author of a 1993 survey that appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, reported that in 1990 — 1990 is seven years ago, so you can imagine what the number is today — Americans made 425 million visits to alternative care providers, more visits than all of the conventional care treatment combined.

1010

So it is certainly an idea that has been embraced by a large sector of our society, and it's an issue that deals with fairness, equity and freedom of choice: fairness for the doctors to explore these alternatives, fairness and freedom of choice for the patients to take greater control of their health care, fairness in the sense that those doctors who are seeking the best treatment for their patients are free from harassment.

We have another article, in the *Economist*, again hardly a radical publication, probably the most respected economic publication in the world. They have an article about what is happening in Vancouver at the Vancouver Hospital, which is the second largest hospital in Canada, and it says:

"Not long ago, orthodox doctors shunned them as quacks. Now the medical profession has begun to ask whether alternative practitioners may have something useful. That is common enough anywhere, but Vancouver Hospital, Canada's second largest, has gone further, making this partnership official. Its new Tzu Chi Institute for Complementary and Alternative Medicine aims to sort

out scientifically the useful from the useless in the welter of non-conventional therapies and to integrate what works into conventional practice."

We have a situation where all of these things are there. The College of Physicians and Surgeons says there's no need for this bill because doctors are free to do it. I have documents, I have many, many letters from doctors who are very supportive of the bill, saying this will in fact help them, and I'd like to read just part of one of them.

He said, "I have been practising on the staff at York Central Hospital for many years, since 1979. Unfortunately, I've been harassed by the college of physicians of Ontario because of my use of alternative approaches to medicine." They're asking that this bill provide them the opportunity to have the ability to do what is best for their patients — and that is the key.

There is a huge demand by patients to have the ability to do this. I hope that as we go into the debate and as you and my colleagues in our caucus speak to it, you will give thought to what is becoming an issue that brings economic benefits to the province because it cuts down the reduction on some aspects of health care. It brings freedom of choice to patients and it allows us to really move forward into the next century.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker: For the members that are in the gallery, perhaps it's your first visit in the Legislature, but you're not supposed to applaud, only the members here on the floor.

Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I welcome the opportunity today to participate in this debate and this discussion about a topic that is both very important and very timely in the evolution of health care and the delivery of health care in this province and in this country.

I'm anxious to hear today from members from all parties their position on this because it is indeed an ongoing, very live debate in my community and I know from some of the correspondence I've received that it's alive and well in many communities across this province. I think it's important, and we have to give thanks to the member for Wilson Heights for bringing it to this place today so that we might have this debate and see where the government stands on this issue, and where it is that we who represent the public will out there — we're elected representatives, called to give leadership on some very important issues and some very important aspects of life as it evolves in this province, and I think we need to be indicating to people where we stand on this.

I know myself that over the last number of months I've had numerous individuals into my office from the alternative health delivery system, people who deal in health foods, who are very concerned with what's happening at the federal level re legislation that might come forward that would inhibit their ability to continue to practise what they've honed over a long number of years, continue to offer to people substances and information and advice they have spent many, many years researching and coming to understand and making good decisions about and wanting to offer to the people they have as their clients or as their customers and whom they serve.

This debate is rather interesting when you put it into some of the context that I think it fits. The member for Wilson Heights suggests that the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario says that we don't need a bill of this sort in front of us today, but the experience of people in the field will tell you very clearly that is not true.

When you look at the experience of, for example, nurse practitioners or midwives over the last number of years in Ontario and Canada, in fact across the world, and the difficulty those groups of professionals have had in having what they do recognized as a very legitimate and positively contributing health practice in all jurisdictions, you begin to understand the difficulty people in the alternative health medicines field are experiencing today. It took a long time; it took a lot of work; it took courage by some governments to bring forward the legislation that would protect those particular professionals in our provinces as they do their work.

I suggest today that should help all of us understand why we need to, if not move forward very aggressively in this field, at least consider this piece of legislation very seriously today so that we might give some indication to the government, as they develop the framework within which health care will be delivered in this province, that we in this place feel it is necessary to protect the good work and the very excellent research and background in this field.

I remember watching for a number of years, because I had some friends involved in it, the evolution of the whole area of chiropractors. Chiropractors at one time in this province, it wasn't so long ago, were considered to be less than professional in many instances. It was only after tremendous effort by people who believed that what chiropractors were doing was right and healthy and in the best interests of the people they serve that eventually we got to a point where they are now recognized under the Health Professions Act and have a scope of practice within which they can operate and have begun to receive some remuneration for the service they offer to people through the public purse.

I think, in looking at this bill, it's very important for all of us to recognize the evolution of health care and recognize the contribution various professions have made over the years to the way we deliver health care, the way we respond to ailments that people run into, the way we have shifted very significantly from an after-the-fact approach to health care, from a disease focus on health care, to a proactive, making-people-healthy, make-sure-people-stay-healthy approach. I think this is all tied in with some of what is happening in the alternative health practices that are happening out there today. I know in my own community we have a number of very excellent people delivering alternative health medicine to people who have come, through their own experience, to understand how important and how valuable that is.

When we recognize, as I've said before, the contribution that various professionals have made to the delivery of health care in the province over the last number of years, and I mentioned nurse practitioners, midwives, physiotherapists and others, I think it's important that we do everything we can in this place as we set the legal framework within which people operate to make sure we

don't inhibit the contribution that people have to make who are willing to go the distance to find different ways to break through the barriers we often establish in the traditional way we do things, to find new ways to both prevent disease from happening and, once we do get sick, to find ways to cure people without sometimes the very intrusive processes and procedures we often see when we enter hospitals today.

It is in that light and in that spirit that I will stand today in support of this bill that's brought before us by the member for Wilson Heights, Mr Kwinter, and look forward this morning to further debate and discussion from members around the floor so that I might be more educated in this business and perhaps challenged, but hope to hear from people that they also support the protection this bill will afford those who choose to practise in the alternative health field.

1020

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to speak in the Legislature on the private member's bill before this House in the name of the member for Wilson Heights, Monte Kwinter. I'd like all members to be aware that in principle I, as a government member, could support this bill. However, again I want to be very clear and want it to be read into the public record that while I may want to support this bill in principle, and as a member of this Legislature could support this bill in principle, we here on this side of the House have some reservations about this bill, not so much in its intent and what it hopes to provide — I will get to that in a few moments — but rather what could happen if it is passed and becomes law in Ontario and does not have amendments to it.

The reason why this bill needs amendments is that we here on this side of the House take health care and legislation that could change health care very seriously, because it is our number one priority as a government. As we heard Finance Minister Ernie Eves say in his budget speech, health care is the number one priority for this government. We must continue to put patients first to bring about and introduce the necessary change so the right kind of legislation works in the best interests of the patient, to ensure that the right kinds of technologies are introduced for patient care so we can continue to have the best health care system in the world.

This bill brings about significant change to the way physicians' professionalism and competence are judged. This is an important distinction, because our support of the principle of this bill is based on the fact that currently legislation and regulation already allow alternative practitioners to practise in Ontario without fear of reprisal. That is why we need amendments to it. That is why we need to have it studied and examined by people in the medical field and health care profession. We need time to ensure that all the concerns of this government, the Ministry of Health and health care professionals are addressed and safeguards put in place so that we as a government can keep our word that we will ensure that we continue to put the patient first.

We must be cautious, because what Mr Kwinter is proposing is significant change to regulated health profession regulation legislation that is a product of over 10 years of consultation and consideration. Caution is

required because this government wants to ensure that practitioners are treated fairly.

Today, if there is a commitment from Mr Kwinter here in the Legislature to seek amendments to this bill, allow for public consultation and address some of the concerns we have and also hear the very real concerns professional people and organizations have in Ontario, if we get this commitment from Mr Kwinter, we will support this bill in principle.

The way this bill reads, it could leave the door open for legal interpretations that could allow members of the medical profession to abuse the sacred covenant between provider and patient.

In an open letter to the Honourable Jim Wilson, Minister of Health, from Geoffrey Bond, president of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Mr Bond states, "The college...does not support Mr Kwinter's bill both because the material contained in it does not belong in the act but rather in the regulations or the bylaws, but also because it is premature and contains a number of other serious flaws which could place the health and safety of Ontarians at risk."

Mr Bond continues his letter to the minister by asking that an ad hoc committee created by the College of Physicians and Surgeons hold public consultations on alternative medicine and non-traditional practice. I agree that there is a need for public consultation.

Regarding the point about regulations or bylaws raised by Mr Bond, this bill would set a precedent in Ontario that medical amendments would now have to be legislated, not regulated. As a government, we have no problem with regulations, good regulations. Just ask the member for Lincoln, Frank Sheehan, the chair of the Red Tape Review Commission. However, it is a custom and tradition in Ontario that professional guidelines, especially misconduct rules, be enshrined in regulations, not legislation. This bill could change that custom and tradition and potentially change the relationship of the CPSO with Ontario's physicians and surgeons.

So I say to Mr Kwinter, let's slow down with this. The CPSO is the self-regulating body that oversees the practices of physicians and surgeons in Ontario, and they have reservations about this bill. Let's give this bill the time it needs to examine every aspect of it more fully and more closely. I believe it would be more useful for you to have the endorsement of the CPSO. It would help to give greater credibility to the people who are providing this kind of care, let alone your bill.

As well, in a discussion with the Federation of Health Regulatory Colleges, it too would be open to public consultations to begin a dialogue on alternative medicines and non-traditional practices. This federation — for the benefit of all members in the House today — oversees all medical professional colleges in Ontario. Their input could bring about greater credibility to their professions, these changes, and ultimately this bill.

In closing, I'd like to say to Mr Kwinter, the member for Wilson Heights, that in principle I will support this bill, but it is a qualified support. We must take our time and go slowly about bringing this kind of significant change so that patient care remains a priority, so that our health care providers are not put at risk, and so that our

health care system continues to remain the very best in the world.

I will support this bill in principle because it reflects the current reality: Alternative practitioners are already allowed to practise in Ontario. I think that when considered from a technical standpoint, this bill is flawed and needs amendments. The test it creates, where a physician can only be found guilty of misconduct if the therapy he or she used can be shown to carry with it a greater level of risk than the traditional therapy, is an impossible one to have to prove. There are other ways to phrase the bill to ensure that alternative practitioners are not discriminated against by the college. The current complaints-based system where the harm test is used has proven to work well for all types of practitioners. We know the CPSO has a committee that is considering a professional misconduct regulation.

So I'd like to ask from you today, Mr Kwinter, a commitment from the CPSO, once it has held its public consultations and once they are completed, to accept amendments to this bill before this bill proceeds past the second reading stage in the legislative process.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): It is a pleasure to be able to address this bill today and to commend my colleague from Wilson Heights, Monte Kwinter, for bringing this forward. We have heard from the member opposite around concerns raised, but I think the reason this bill is here today and the reason we are discussing it today is appropriate. This Legislature is here to discuss matters of great and substantive public interest and to ensure that great and substantive interest has a forum, that it has a means of finding expression.

We know that throughout this province there are people who have learned to rely on different parts of alternative medical therapy in all manner of forms. We know there has been a dialogue about these forms of medicine or treatment for a long, long time. Of course, ironically, many of the types of alternative medicine that would be enabled by this bill, or better enabled, have been around a lot longer than what we now call our traditional medical practices. But so has the debate; so has the discussion.

1030

The problem with the debate and the discussion to this point is that it has taken place mainly in closed rooms, mainly in the hearings of the organizations that we have set up to deal with these kinds of things on a technical basis. But what eludes them in those closed rooms is what is the substantive public interest here: How do we as a society want to proceed?

We have heard what unfortunately some of the other — this side of the House can, outside of this hour where it's private members' business, and we know that sincerity is coming from individuals rather than platitudes from the government. But quite often that's how we're sometimes led to take them, because as we see the future of the health care system in this province, we wonder, of course, around the commitment reflected in some of the decisions of this government towards good health care and good choices for people around high quality health care.

We certainly see that there is a place, a place that's been acknowledged by the section set out by the OMA on alternative medicine, a place that's been acknowledged by the College of Physicians and Surgeons itself, in albeit a different process it would like to see go ahead and acknowledged by other jurisdictions around the world, a place in an improving medical system for alternative medicine.

As we on this side of the House look at being faced with the potential responsibility of having to clean up some of the problems this government is going to create with an unplanned system, if there is going to be an integrated health system, it is going to be one with just that type of choice available to patients, and rather to people who are no longer so much patients but informed people who have real choice about the kinds of things they can do for their health and wellbeing. As we try to advance, and it is hard to advance given some of the strictures that we have facing our current system, we want to make sure we've opened up the choices that are available, that we've made sure that as we try and give the people of this province and the existing practitioners, for whom we have great respect — this is not an adversarial piece of legislation in any respect, I would put forward to you today. This is a piece of legislation that tries to put forward the public interest, that tries to say, "Here is where we must discuss, what we as elected representatives must wrestle with."

I take the point of the member opposite that there may be, and I have heard, what I think amounts to significant concern, but those points are not what we're here to discuss today. We're here to discuss the merit of the bill.

There is a place called committee where technical wording and other things can be worked out, where those backroom discussions and the substantive arguments that have been made there can find their place and can find their expression. We in this legislative process know that we have those checks and safeguards. But we would be very remiss today if we did not put forward the public interest, if we did not show, each of us, to our constituents an openness to having a system which is — without seeing it as adversarial, it is tilted towards a traditional practice — a system and the safeguards that come from a different way of thinking about how we can ensure good health and good medicine in these times.

I believe it is incumbent on us today to pass this act at second reading, to provide for better medicine, for better choices for people, to see, I think also in the public interest, the kinds of things that many of us are only notionally aware of brought into the mainstream of consideration where they will benefit not only ourselves, not only people frustrated in the current system, but really the advancement of ourselves as a society and as a people.

I think we've had for too long a close-minded idea about how we practise medicine. We've had for too long a closed idea about how we have an integrated health system, because it really means, and this is a test we will hold the government to, a variety of quality methods available to people. It really means a society not giving away or getting rid of responsibility for the wellbeing of people, but having that happen through the choice of that person working with a variety of practitioners.

Yes, we have an obligation that we will not drop, we will not dilute, to ensure the safety of people, but we also will not show a fear of unknown things in terms of what this comes to bear because we have a substantive idea. We have the World Health Organization commitment, we have the examination and the work done in other sections of the country and other jurisdictions, to know that this bill and what it intends to do is substantially in the public interest. Thank you.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I am very pleased today to support the private member's bill by the member for Wilson Heights. Obviously, as this is private members' hour, I'm here as a private member, but I also want to speak as a former Minister of Health in this province who was the last in a long line of health ministers — I think there were eight of us, spanning 10 years and three different political parties in government — dealing with regulated health professions legislation and finally bringing the final RHPA reforms through.

I can tell you, in the dying days of that process there was a flurry of activity of people trying to get the scopes of practice changed for various professions, one more thing added or one more thing deleted and a lot of delineation, much of that motivated by real concern for patient care. But I have to be honest; I found a certain amount of it also motivated by what I would call, in layman's terms, "turf protection." I believe health care is too important to allow turf protection to get in the way of providing the widest range of opportunities for people to seek wellbeing in our communities.

I think there is an evolution that has taken place. As a child, I grew up in a family where my primary health caregiver was a naturopath-chiropractor, a cross-profession. There was a medical doctor as well, but much of the family's wellbeing was taken care of by a naturopath-chiropractor. This is something that I was exposed to, I guess, from an early age. In those days — this perhaps suggests how old I am — naturopaths and chiropractors and a whole range of people were called quacks by the medical profession.

I went through a period of time where I was involved in helping bring through the regulation to regulate midwifery, to bring it back from the netherlands of unregulated practice, illegal practice, to bring it into the regulated scheme. For a period of time there was a great opposition to midwifery. We're now seeing a very similar process around nurse practitioners. There is an evolution here and there is, I believe, a need for us to have openness in looking at many alternatives that are out there.

I have medical practitioners in my riding who are also providers of alternative medicine, who are part of the OMA section looking at alternative medicines and who have been rallying behind many of the doctors who feel that they have been harassed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons' process. I'm very glad that the College of Physicians and Surgeons is also now looking at this.

I'm interested to see the concerns that are raised, that perhaps there could be greater sexual abuse of patients if you don't have the tight regulations. I remember feeling the wounds from the profession when we tried to bring in the tough controls in the legislation around sexual abuse. But we got past that, and the college took a very important leadership role when they set up their task force.

They're doing that again. But I couldn't agree more with the sentiment that is being proffered that says we have to bring this discussion out into the open. It is not good enough to only read about these cases where doctors are being brought before disciplinary processes, where patients are coming forward and expressing that this treatment has been a lifeline for them and yet to see the continued prosecution of individuals.

I believe we have to move beyond that to have an open debate about the nature of a multidisciplinary delivery of health care and what that means and how some of the areas of health care which we can't immediately bring into the medicare system — we're in the middle of restructuring our hospitals and our medical services and our other regulated health professions right now — but we shouldn't preclude the opportunity to explore and to learn from and to perhaps find better ways of treating certain conditions.

As diseases have become more complex, as we've seen chronic fatigue syndrome, as we have seen environmental hypersensitivity, as we've seen a lot of things that we don't quite understand in the traditional medical view of what is happening with the human body, we have found alternative therapies which have given great help to individuals. We must do all we can as legislators to ensure that help is there and available, of course with all the safeguards, of course with all the regulatory protections that are our responsibility to put in place, but a system that welcomes an exploration of those alternatives, not one that relegates them to the world of quackery. I think that's what this debate is about.

1040

I believe the bill that's before us would need to be amended, would need to be more specific in certain areas of how that would work, but that's not the issue at second reading. The government, I would argue, should step in at this point in time and actually take this over as a government bill and work with all of us in this Legislature and all the people who have a public interest in this to bring about good legislation.

As the Minister of Health I worked with a member of the Conservative Party at that time on a private member's bill the member had that was in the public interest, I believe, to ensure that bill got passage. I worked to help provide amendments the ministry could live with that I could then get the government to support. That's an alternative.

I believe that the Minister of Health should be here today participating in this debate and helping the member bring this bill forward in a way that it can be brought into law. That's the challenge I put forward to members of the government.

I will be supporting this bill today. I hope this bill gets referred to committee or is taken over by a government bill so we can work to bring about this kind of legislation in Ontario that opens up our doors to explore alternative therapies, to explore alternative medicines, to find alternatives to help people be the healthiest they can, to promote a community of wellbeing in this province. Thank you very much.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): The member for Wilson Heights has put forth an interesting bill, and I

commend him for his sincere interest in broadening the scope of Ontario's health care system. His introduction of Bill 126 has brought to the forefront a growing issue among patients and practitioners of both the traditional and alternative medical professions.

As some of you may be aware, I've been a veterinarian for some 35 years and have heard on occasion about alternative medical practices. Before you jump to conclusions and start saying, "What does a veterinarian know about this?" there are a lot of similarities between veterinarian medicine and human medicine. Humans just happen to be one more step up the mammalian list. I've observed and talked to farmers and seen what happens with livestock and heard some very strange suggestions they come out with, but many farmers have very keen observations of responses of livestock.

The very basis of good quality research is the ability to keenly observe. Never did I scoff at any suggestions that have been put forth as some of these alternative suggestions, because down the road many times you're able to prove very scientifically that those alternative suggestions really work very, very well.

Probably Doug Galt is one of the greatest sceptics there has ever been when it comes to alternative suggestions of medical treatment. Coming through a scientific community: If you can't prove it, don't throw it in front of me. However, you have to look around and observe other things that are happening out there. Certainly I have observed livestock with the desire to live when they shouldn't have and survived; when livestock had the desire to die, when they had had perfect medical treatment, and died. It's something like Henry Ford's comment that if you think you can, or if you think you can't, you're probably right and that's how it turns out.

There's a great book that was written back in the mid-1960s by Dr Bernie Siegel, who is basically a cancer surgeon. The book is called *Love, Medicine and Miracles*. Most of that book contains testimonials, stories about various patients he was working with. He compares himself to a mechanic, where he can remove things or parts but he couldn't keep people alive, that keeping people alive came from within. If you didn't have the desire to live, often with the very best of medical treatment you still died; but if you had the desire to live, often in spite of the greatest odds, you did end up being able to survive.

Health care in Ontario and around the world is changing and we have an opportunity to be leaders in the health care continuum. However, change must proceed with care, especially when the outcome could significantly affect the quality of essential public services and ultimately the health of the people of Ontario.

Putting patients first is number one, and this is non-negotiable when it comes to discussing changes in our health care system. This means taking a proactive approach to new health care practices. Chiropractic manipulation and acupuncture are two examples of alternative medical practices which have faced tough opposition over the years from traditional medical practitioners.

After having been condemned as scientifically unsubstantiated for many years, the perseverance and dedication of practitioners to their profession have been rewarded with scientific data which many needed to validate

these methods. Certainly I've received treatment from chiropractors, and as I mentioned earlier, I was probably one of their greatest sceptics. However, observing results was the proof of the pudding.

We might therefore keep in mind that although scientific studies have not been conducted on many non-traditional medical practices, there are also many traditional techniques in common use today that have not undergone these tests. For example, practices such as angioplasty and bypass surgery, which are important life-saving techniques used every day in hospitals, have never been subject to controlled, random, doubleblind tests. In fact, approximately 85% to 90% of accepted traditional medical practices are not based on such studies, and I have personally found this to be quite surprising. It seems apparent that the medical and scientific community needs to work together towards a consensus as to what constitutes proper research procedure which thereby leads to the evidence that would be needed to prove that one treatment does indeed pose a greater risk to the patient than another.

At this point it is apparent that consultations need to be considered before proceeding with legislation. As Bill 126 stands, it would place the onus on the regulating body to prove that an alternate practice holds a greater risk than the traditional methods. The difficulty with this lies in the lack of a consistent method for determining how "evidence" would be defined.

Although the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario openly opposes Bill 126, over a year ago they established an ad hoc committee to review the issue of how the college should regulate its members who choose to offer alternative medical therapies. This committee has plans to conduct public consultation over the coming months.

I must once again stress that putting the patient first is of the utmost importance and should remain the primary focus in any discussions which could potentially affect their health and safety.

It is for this reason that, although the member opposite has brought forward a bill with merit, I strongly believe there must be some amendments made to it before I can confidently vote in favour of its final passage.

Alternative or complementary treatments have a growing following. Statistics Canada released the figure that 3.3 million Canadians looked for non-traditional medical treatment in 1996.

The people of Ontario presently not only have access to a comprehensive health care system but to one of the finest in the world. However, they also deserve the opportunity to access safe and accountable treatment from all forms of medical practice.

Amendments are needed to Bill 126 that would ensure public safety, thereby preventing dispute over changes to the medical act. This would address one major concern about the bill as it stands today.

I look forward to a positive outcome for all those involved with this bill. With the foregoing comments, I can support its second reading but would look forward to several amendments prior to its coming back to the House for third reading, because then I could support it with those amendments.

1050

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It's a pleasure for me to take part in this debate today. I want to first congratulate my colleague the member for Wilson Heights for having the conviction to bring forward this amendment, one that I believe represents a progressive step towards recognizing complementary medical treatment in Ontario and something that is long, long overdue. I also want to congratulate the member for Wilson Heights for debunking some of the myths about complementary medicine, myths which have been used to hold off the use of complementary medical treatments.

In the time I have I want to talk about the positive economic benefits of welcoming complementary medicine into our health care delivery model. I believe that by fostering a collaborative health care model we'll improve the quality and reduce the costs of health care overall.

As many people know, our health care system is under considerable financial strain due to the costs associated with pharmaceutical drugs and surgical treatments and due to demographic pressures on the system.

Today's environment demands flexibility and adaptability. If we're going to meet the evolving health care needs in our society, we must draw on all our available resources and be prepared to seize on different ideas. This includes not only the latest technological advances but also all of civilization's past beneficial experiences.

Ontarians believe in a health care system that is universally accessible but also understand that it needs to be delivered in the most cost-effective manner possible. There is a basic understanding today that we don't have the resources to further expand our current health care system and therefore we must adapt and find additional approaches to health remedies. It is regrettable that it has taken a financial crunch to force us to adapt our health care delivery model. In the past number of years, we've finally begun to move from a model totally based on treating the sick to one which is aimed at giving more weight to preventing illness; in other words, preventive care.

There is an enormous body of knowledge that has been passed over by conventional medicine. Some of it dates back thousands and thousands of year, such as acupuncture or herbal treatments. It's irrational from a health care point of view that we would turn a blind eye to solutions that can play a positive role. It's also very paternalistic and egocentric for conventional medical organizations to think that only they can come up with certain answers. This simply isn't the case and it's a xenophobic perspective.

The human body is an amazing and mysterious machine that has the unique capacity to heal itself. Encouraging that healing process is a fundamental key to quality of life, and that is what complementary medicine is all about: preventive care. Complementary medicine also helps produce improved patient outcomes for fewer economic inputs. Its preventive nature reduces both the incident and the cost of illness by focusing on wellness.

The reality is that we all in one form or another engage in modified complementary medicine, whether it's an old family cold remedy or changes to one's lifestyle through diet or exercise to address an ailment that

prevents a trip to the doctor's office. Not only does this save on the immediate costs of our health care system, it saves in the long run as we accept more of the responsibility for the state of our own personal health.

This hardly sounds controversial or revolutionary. Complementary medicine saves lives and it saves money. Many insurance companies are recognizing its cost-effective benefits and are now covering some naturopathic treatments.

We are not advocating that complementary medicine replace conventional medicine, nor does this bill seek to undermine conventional medicine. In short, it seeks to enhance the health delivery model to ensure that patients have information on and access to all of the health care options. It makes no sense that with something so volatile as the human body, we would straitjacket ourselves with a singularly focused medical approach. It makes sense for all of us to keep the door open to all potential effective solutions.

I want to talk in a tangible way about the Carlington Medical Centre in my riding of Ottawa Centre, which has put together a chiropractic referral program for low-income individuals whereby low-income individuals are able to access chiropractic services through a referral system; 70% of the individuals who use this clinic are low-income. The linking of chiropractic services with family medical services has opened up a new avenue of treatment that these individuals, for economic reasons, would not have access to. It opens the door to new ways of looking at the delivery of health care and how we approach illness, and the cooperation between doctors, nurses and chiropractors is possibly an important model for the future.

In conclusion, there is support in almost all quarters, with some reservations in the medical establishment, to increase the treatment options for illness prevention and health care. The increase in complementary medicine will be more economical, more effective and, equally important, will greatly strengthen the notion of more individual self-responsibility in maintaining health and preventing illness. For this reason, I look forward to voting in favour of the bill.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I too would like to commend my colleague from Wilson Heights for bringing forward a most thoughtful and progressive private member's bill. When we created the concept of multiculturalism — on which I take a different view than many of my colleagues have taken — in Canada, many foresaw this as new immigrants bringing into Canada various dances and exotic foods which we only acquire when we travel overseas. New Canadians have brought with them knowledge and skills that covers thousands and thousands of years, generations.

The member for Northumberland made a very interesting point. One such knowledge that we have is health science that was brought by many of these people who came to Canada. Many of us can recall an ailment that was healed through the use of a remedy that was handed down through generations. When I was a young boy — that wasn't long ago — I recall my mother administering the sap of a plant to chickens or cattle that had come down with what would have seemed to be the common

cold. Within 10 days, whatever it was that was ailing the animal, a total recovery was experienced.

My friend on the other side said there were side-effects. Today, aloe vera is hailed as one of the wonder cures that relieve a variety of ailments. What may be considered as non-traditional medicine in Canada is very much traditional in China, India, Africa or the West Indies. When we are looking at non-traditional and traditional medicine, we must then start thinking that what is traditional to Canada may be something that is quite non-traditional to other regimes, and that what is traditional to other countries may be quite beneficial to us in Canada.

This government will spend billions of dollars on health care despite, as we know, the closing of hospitals, putting sick and elderly people at great risk. They fail to reach out to, as my colleague said, complementary approaches to the problems in the health care and health science sector.

The pharmaceutical industry and the advertising market have created a climate where the only thing that is being looked at these days is symptoms, and that is what is being treated. A cure often is ignored. Why? Because I presume we focus very much on the economic interest to do so.

No one part of the body functions on its own. Inflammation has a purpose and a meaning, and to stop the inflammation doesn't correct the problem; sometimes we find out it has merely masked that which is causing the inflammation. We as a society need to develop a holistic approach to medicine, the way the body was meant to function, rather than digesting any number of pills and liquids that are preferred as instant solutions to complex problems.

I will heartily support this private member's bill and I urge all my colleagues to move in that direction, because there are thousands and thousands — as a matter of fact, millions — of people in Ontario only who are today seeking alternative solutions to the problems they have. Putting the patient first is one of the things we often hear in here. If there is any approach to medicine that puts the patient first, it is the complementary, alternative medicine that is being practised today. People should not be punished for it. That is what the legislation is asking for: that a situation that shows that ailments are being resolved should be looked at very seriously.

I urge members to support this. Give it second reading. Of course, any amendments must be considered and concerns can be addressed in our public hearings. When it comes back here, third reading should not be a problem.

1100

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Wilson Heights, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Kwinter: I want to thank all of my colleagues on all sides of the House because, notwithstanding some reservations, I really detected that there was approval in principle for this bill, which is what this second reading is all about.

I would like to first of all acknowledge, which is almost unprecedented, the number of people in the public galleries, and if you look behind you, those members on the government side, you will get an opportunity to see the interest that there is in this subject.

The question I want to address in the couple of minutes that I have left is the question that was raised by the member for Scarborough Centre and his concerns with the bill.

When I was drafting this bill — and as all of you know, I don't draft the bill, the bill is drafted by legislative counsel — it was their advice, it was their counsel who said, "This is an appropriate bill to be addressed in amending the Medicine Act of 1991." Notwithstanding the concerns of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, this particular wording, as I said in my opening remarks, has been used verbatim in the Helsinki agreement by the World Health Organization and by Alberta and several states in the United States.

When I was contemplating this bill and when word got out about it, there was a lot of interest in it and lots of people wanting me to put lots of things into the bill. I resisted that for the very reason that this is a very complex issue, without question, but Bill 126 is a platform. It is a platform on which to build better health care for the people of Ontario, to provide freedom of choice for citizens, to provide fairness and equity to medical practitioners, and I certainly hope that I can get the support of everybody in this House for second reading. Then as it goes to committee, we can certainly address those other concerns that have been expressed.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I am pleased to move private member's notice of motion number 50:

That, in the opinion of this House, the federal government should be urged to recognize the seriousness of impaired driving by amending the Criminal Code to provide for the following penalties:

For first offences: seven days' incarceration, provided no accident has resulted; 30 days' incarceration, if an accident has resulted; one to five years' incarceration, if an accident has occurred and an injury or death has resulted;

For second or subsequent offences: 60 days' incarceration, provided no accident has resulted; six months' incarceration, if an accident has resulted; five to 10 years' incarceration, if an accident has occurred and an injury or death has resulted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Wettlaufer: Between 1991 and 1995, there were 29,000 injuries and fatalities as a result of motor vehicle accidents involving drinking drivers or those legally impaired, and that's only in the province of Ontario. In 1995 alone, there were 5,000 injuries or fatalities in Ontario. Every year in Ontario nearly 350 people are killed; in 1994, however, there were 544 killed.

These are statistics, the fatalities. We hear them every day. We hear them on television, we hear them on the radio, we read about it in the newspaper. We have become immune to them because they're only fatalities, they're only statistics. Let's call them what they are. They're deaths. They are lives snuffed out.

I have to admit that there has been a decrease in injuries and deaths over the last 10 years, and the figures

are often cited to demonstrate the success that we as a society are having with our educational programs, with RIDE, with designated drivers etc. But until the year 1995, there had been a year-over-year increase in the number of property damage accidents involving drinking.

Many of us, probably most of us in this House, when we were younger drove after drinking, and I'm sure that some of us were impaired. We thought it was smart, we thought it was macho. It was socially acceptable, until we got caught. Yes, it was macho. To the member for Windsor-Sandwich, I say that 10 times as many men get caught driving impaired as women. We have to demonstrate that it is no longer socially acceptable to drink and drive.

In 1996 our government enacted the administrative driver's licence suspension program, better known as ADLS. Drivers who fail or refuse a breath test automatically lose their licence administratively for 90 days. In October 1996, our own government member for Mississauga South, Margaret Marland, introduced Bill 85, which provides for a one-year suspension of licence on the first conviction, a three-year suspension on the second and a five-year suspension on the third. On a fourth conviction, the licence is revoked.

The Manitoba government has enacted the vehicle seizure and impoundment program. If the convicted driver continues to drive, the vehicle is impounded. Unfortunately, too often the vehicle that he or she will drive won't be his or her own and the owner of the vehicle must prove that he or she didn't know that this driver didn't have a licence.

I don't diminish the importance of those bills or programs that have been enacted either by ourselves or by other administrations. I think they are a recognition of the importance of this issue. But what I have seen in 33 years of experience in the insurance business is that suspended drivers continue to drive. It doesn't matter whether or not they have had licence suspensions because of impaired driving, they continue to drive. Clearly, tough action is needed.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving has approached federal governments and largely their approaches have been met with indifference. Successive federal governments have ignored the issue. What is needed, really, is the influence of the government representing the largest province, representing nearly 40% of the country in population. The influence of this government is needed to negotiate stiffer penalties.

In other countries there are stiffer penalties. In some Middle East countries impaired driving has a penalty of death. In some countries it has a penalty of caning. As a matter of fact, in North America yesterday an individual was charged with first-degree murder, which carries the death penalty.

I'm not advocating that we bring back the cat-o'-nine-tails but I am advocating that this is a reprehensible act, it is a despicable act, it is a selfish act and it is a wilful act. It demonstrates wilful disregard for the safety and the lives of others.

The purpose of the resolution is to demonstrate to the government the level of support that the resolution has within this chamber with us and with our constituents

both urban and rural across this province to put pressure on the federal government to make the penalties much, much stiffer.

I was going to ask for unanimous consent to make a change to my resolution because, as many of the members in this House know, we do work very long hours and when I proofread this initially I missed a key word and the key word was "following 'minimum' penalties." But I won't do that because the principle behind this is really to direct our government to negotiate with the federal government.

1110

I would like to draw your attention to the statistical yearbook, 1994, *Drinking and Driving in Ontario*, specifically page A-5, table 2, "Alcohol use among motor vehicle fatalities, Ontario, 1994." The significance of this table is that the majority of drinking and driving offences occur between the ages of 19 and 44, supposedly the mature ages.

I would like also to draw your attention to page A-16 in the same drinking and driving statistical yearbook. The significance of this table is that there has been no dramatic decrease in the percentage of impaired drivers since 1985.

I would also like to read a letter from Sandra Henderson of Kitchener, Sandra's story.

"It was May, 1992, and I was wondering what to get my daughter Nancy for her 25th birthday. Should I buy something for her new apartment or something more personal? Before I had a chance to buy that present for her or wish her happy birthday, Nancy was killed in a car crash caused by a drunk driver. I didn't get a chance to say good-bye."

Mr Speaker, many of us ran for election for the future of our children and our grandchildren. If it was your child who had been killed, would you have been mad enough to want to kill the other party? I ask you, I ask the members, would you have been angry enough to want to cause bodily harm to that impaired driver? Would you have been devoid of all feeling?

Larry Cripps from Kitchener, a friend of mine, is in the gallery. He lost his son. I don't want to go to any more funerals for children of my friends.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I think we can all relate to the kinds of experiences this member has just talked about. I agree that it's totally unacceptable that in our province over 350 people have died — I believe that's what he said, or maybe that was Canada-wide — as a result of drinking and driving offences.

At the same time, it ought to be said that the attitude of young people nowadays is quite a bit different from when I was growing up. When I think back to the 1950s and 1960s, it was quite common for young people to get a case of beer in the car and to go out for a drive, particularly at some social or high school event etc. It was almost a customary thing.

When I compare that to the attitude now of my own children and their friends, I think a much more responsible attitude prevails now within our society. It was a

macho kind of thing to do back then, and certainly a lot of that has been taken out of the system already.

We could certainly do a lot more as far as the education side of this issue is concerned, because 350 deaths or the countless number of injuries that occur as a result of drinking and driving are still totally unacceptable. But I think we've come a long way, and the schools and the various police departments ought to be commended for the kinds of programs they have carried on.

Whether the kinds of penalties he is suggesting in his resolution are appropriate, particularly when he talks about one to five years' incarceration if an accident occurs on a first offence, I'm not so sure. I still believe we could be a lot tougher as far as the licence suspensions are concerned. The minimum suspensions called for in the Ontario Highway Traffic Act are too lenient, quite frankly, but even there we've come a long way.

I can well remember that when I first started my practice as a lawyer, back in the early 1970s, it was quite common for provincial court judges in those days to allow offenders to retain their licences for a certain period to drive to and from work. Thank goodness that's been taken out of the system, because it was almost farcical in some situations, in terms of the people who were convicted and somehow were still able to drive.

I happen to have some relatives who live in Japan, and it's interesting that there, drinking and driving is almost totally unacceptable to the entire society, young or old. One of the reasons for that is the fact that if you ever get convicted of drinking and driving you basically lose your right to drive a vehicle for life. I understand that statistically the incidence of drinking and driving offences there is very low because people realize the seriousness of the consequences if one gets convicted of a drinking and driving offence. To lose your licence for life or for a significant period of time, certainly well beyond the one-year minimum called for in the Highway Traffic Act, is much more serious, something we should all take very seriously.

I'm not sure whether the kind of penalties he calls for are realistic. I think we should pay much closer attention and place the emphasis on the licence suspension. But I will be supporting this resolution, as far as I as a private member am concerned, because I think it will send the right kind of message to people that this kind of situation we, as elected members of the Legislature, simply will not condone. I will be supporting it.

I doubt very much whether any federal government, whichever party gets elected, will impose restrictions as severe as he is suggesting here, but it will be part of the education process that we as a society have to go through to make drinking and driving totally unacceptable in our province.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I am pleased to join the debate today on this important resolution. People who watch this place regularly will know that from time to time we have issues that come to the floor of this place that are not partisan in nature, that cut through all the politics that are a necessary component of this Legislature, and deal with issues that affect each of us in a way that just doesn't allow divisions along party lines. I see this as very much one of those issues and commend the member for Kitchener for bringing this forward.

Like the member for Kingston and The Islands, I too can recall, not that long ago, when societal standards were very different, much as they are different now around smoking in places that affect other people with secondary smoke, seatbelts, helmets for motorcycle drivers. The idea that someone would have the right, under our Constitution and our bill of rights, to get behind the wheel of a potentially destructive machine like a car totally unable to properly control such a vehicle is absolutely not only unacceptable, but I think it sickens each of us when we hear of cases such as the member for Kitchener brought forward of Nancy.

1120

All of us have been touched in some way or another by someone who's been seriously injured or killed in a car accident involving someone who was impaired. We know — certainly I remember from my time as the Solicitor General — that much of the cause is repeat offenders. When you read the paper about someone who's been killed in a car accident and someone's been charged with impaired, you find out that they've got a whole long history of total disregard for the rights of other citizens. In fact, in far too many cases those drivers are driving while their licence is suspended — a total, absolute, complete disregard for anybody else's concern except their own.

There has to be during the court process some recognition of the fact that there are addictions and circumstances that a judge or a jury must weigh out, because sometimes there are cases where our family member or friend wasn't the victim but the driver. It's always important that we keep that balance, because it's never cut and dried when we deal with any kind of justice issue, which is why I continue to be proud of our justice system. With all the complaints and the criticisms, and many are justified, we still have one of the finest justice systems in the world and we shouldn't lose sight of that.

You learn a lot about people, not just from their formal speeches in this place, but from a lot of the quips and things that people say beside you and near you when the focus is elsewhere in this place. I was pleased to hear, given some of my experiences, given that the member for Kitchener only sits a few seats over, that he didn't want to bring back the cat-o'-nine-tails. A review of his idea of what is fair punishment is certainly warranted, given what I've heard from time to time, but I'm pleased to see that he's not going way off the beam, as some of the members of his party tend to do when we deal with justice issues. They want to press the hot button and go for the emotional impact over and above the reality of a balanced, fair judicial system that metes out discipline and punishment in a way that is acceptable to the majority of Canadians.

But in this resolution I think he speaks to the kinds of sentences we would all support. I'm not going to say his formula is exactly the one we ought to follow. I was pleased to hear that he said it's the principles behind what is presented here that are of the utmost importance to him, and I share that. Therefore, I will also be supporting the resolution and certainly the principles behind it. I would implore the member, and his colleagues, when he talks about compassion — and I think each of us was

moved; certainly I was. That was a very moving speech and I enjoyed listening to you, and I think you evoked the kind of reaction in each of us and anyone watching that you were hoping to. I think most people watching today hope this Legislature would unanimously support this resolution.

I ask and implore the honourable member and his colleagues that when you reach inside you on an issue that you care about strongly, as clearly the member for Kitchener does, and you manage to bring forward that much feeling and that much compassion, I would ask the members of the government to please reach in for that compassion when we're dealing with other pieces of legislation.

I felt, as closely as anyone can from listening to a speech, some of the pain the member's friend in the gallery today has gone through, and I would bring to the attention of the government that there are thousands and thousands of other people who are feeling pain also, a different kind of pain but pain none the less, as a result of some of the actions this government has taken and some of the laws it has passed. I'm very pleased to see that kind of emotion coming from the member for Kitchener and I was pleased to see that everyone in the House was listening, riveted to what he said.

But I urge you, please transfer some of that compassion and some of that caring to some of the other people who are hurting in our society. As you boast of the numbers — the deficit number, the debt number, the tax reduction and all the people who are so pleased to receive extra money — please think of the people, particularly the poorest of the poor, who are hurting. They're going through their own pain. I think maybe what we need in this place is a little more compassion, a little more reaching out and a little more understanding of the pain that far too many Ontarians are going through.

I close my remarks by again complimenting the member on bringing forward this excellent resolution. This kind of resolution on this issue is always timely. I certainly will be very proud to offer my support to him. He knows that doesn't come lightly, but in this case I have absolutely no problem and will be very proud to join hopefully all the other members who are in this place today in passing this resolution, because I believe it reflects where society is on this issue. The more and more we can keep impaired drivers off the streets, the fewer and fewer Nancys each of us will have to deal with.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'm pleased to speak to this private member's bill that the member for Kitchener has brought forward. I too will be supportive of the bill. I believe the intent of it is certainly an honourable one and that the intent Mr Wettlaufer brings is one that he hopes will be adopted in spirit, not just by parliamentarians, but by everyone out there who drives a car and/or has family members who drive; and that it will help in the education of drivers, in making all of us more responsible and aware that all our actions often have very severe consequences and we must take those responsibly.

I'd like to speak for a moment on the specifics of this. If this should be passed on to committee and actually gets to the point where we're discussing the details of it, I

think it would be fairly difficult to actually bring forward into law. Regardless of what party may be in power, it would be very difficult to do so.

In looking at this as an issue, it reminded me immediately of a law in California, a state that I rarely speak about and one that I think many of us should be looking to, because they have done a number of things as a government that would be considered right-wing. They are under a Republican government. What they have in California is called a three-strikes law. What they found was that while the intent was to be very tough on crime — in this case, each time you would be charged with something and subsequently convicted, the penalty would become stiffer and stiffer. The intent, as a parallel to the member for Kitchener, is the same in that it becomes tougher and tougher and so should be more and more of a deterrent. What happened in California was that when they finally implemented this, no one looked to the cost of implementation. What they've found since then is that the bill is absolutely impossible to implement. In fact, the three-strikes law alone accounts for an increase annually of \$5.5 billion to the system.

The irony for me, in discussing a bill like this, whose intent I agree with and will be supportive of, is that I also know this is the same government in this day and age that is making such significant cuts to our systems that we will never be able to implement it. If the Conservative government continues in office, we will never be able to implement it. It costs an enormous amount of additional expense to the judicial system, to the systems under the control of the Solicitor General. In these two areas alone we have seen so far, in the last two years of government here, such a bulging in our system that has yet to be funded appropriately, and that will continue.

In the budget that was announced just the other day, we see no relief in sight. Here we have an Attorney General's office that can't cope with the simple transaction of money from parents who pay support to parents who accept support by law. There is such a terrible situation going on in families that are going through family support. That is the same Attorney General who will now be charged with a doubling and trebling of cases and litigation and court time and judges. This is a government that will not be funding it, as is evidenced over the last two years.

1130

Secondly, we have another minister here in the House, the Solicitor General, another member at the cabinet table authorizing massive cuts across the system; this at a time when we will need more and more of it. What happened in California during this — these are individuals who are certainly experts in the field. One gentleman says: "Does that mean that I triple my staff? Where is the money going to come from to pay for that?"

The law could have some ironic consequences. It's filling jails with defendants awaiting trial who refuse to plea bargain, because if they were to plea bargain and actually enter a guilty plea, that means automatically that becomes their second offence. The next time around they could be looking a crime that is a life sentence, for example. They are not going forward with that. That means more dangerous inmates will have to be released

early, because as it goes down the line we are then letting more dangerous criminals actually out on to the street. That is the irony, that the three-strikes law which was to prevent crime is actually put more crime into the streets.

While the expensive processing of a growing number of criminals is enormous, the cost of imprisoning those is even greater. There is no one there to ensure the system will have the funding it needs to implement the law they've actually passed. By the end they realize their options are simply to raise taxes, which hardly seems like a political option, or to completely cut off funding for other services like public education, pollution control or firefighting.

The irony for us of course is to see that this is the state of California. Here's a state, California, that has completely sucked dry the public education system. They're actually worried about having to pull even more money out of that system, which is considered failing in public education, because they cannot find the money to properly fund their judiciary system there.

Clearly something will have to give and it will be interesting to see what it will be. I caution all the members of the House that while all of us are going to probably or likely — I speak on my own — be very supportive of the intent, because on its merit its intent is absolutely honourable and I'm very happy to support it, I will tell you that we would be far more ahead if we could get these same Conservative members to ensure that we properly fund both the office of the Attorney General and the office of the Solicitor General. That so far has not happened.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I rise in support of this resolution. As was said earlier by the member for Hamilton Centre, there are times in this Legislature — at least it's what's supposed to happen at private members' hour — when members come into this House without partisan affiliation, trying to address particular problems that face Ontarians within this province. This is one occasion where the particular member, the member for Kitchener, is trying to do just that.

A couple of things need to be said in this particular debate. First of all, the reason the member is calling upon the federal government to deal with this issue is because what he's asking be done can primarily only be done by the federal government because it falls under the Canadian Criminal Code.

It should be said for the record that this Legislature on two occasions over the last two or three years has passed resolutions and laws that stiffen the suspension for drunk drivers. What we have jurisdiction on here in Ontario is that, if you're caught impaired, we can suspend your driver's licence.

I believe that on at least two occasions, once in the last Parliament and once in this Parliament, there were two private members' bills that went through this House, that were passed and eventually adopted, where the suspensions were actually increased for people with drunk driving. I think that's a pretty good approach. People need to recognize that driving is not a right, but is a responsibility. With that responsibility comes the acceptance of your responsibility towards other people out there who may be in danger because of how you may drive

your vehicle. That needs to be said, that this Legislature is actually probably further ahead than most jurisdictions in dealing with this issue.

The interesting thing about this as well is that this is another example where we can point to our federal government really not taking its responsibility on a number of key issues. It seems that the Chrétien Liberals in Ottawa, since 1993, since coming to power, have had a fairly free ride. If you take a look at them — for any government elected to the federal House — I know that Mr Mulroney was chastised and chased around the country for a number of years when he was Prime Minister of the country, and prior to that the Trudeau government was chased and chastised over a number of issues.

What we've seen in Ottawa is quite interesting. Since 1993 you have a federal government — quite apart from political partisanship, and I am a New Democrat, I think it needs to be said that no matter what these guys do, it seems that either the media doesn't follow it closely enough or there isn't a strong enough opposition in Ottawa to say to the federal Liberals, "Hey, get your act together."

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): This is true.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: The Tories are agreeing with me on this one. I think this is another example where the federal government has some power. The federal government controls the Criminal Code and the federal government can try to address this issue in a progressive and positive way to be able to diminish the risk to citizens in our province and across this country. This is another example where the Chrétien government is saying: "Oh, we don't want to straddle the fence to drop on one side or on the other on this one. Maybe we'll offend this citizen, or maybe we'll offend this other special interest group that's out there." They sort of walk the fence on this one.

I think what this House is attempting to do is to say to the federal government in Ottawa: "Listen, you have a responsibility. You need to make sure that you take that responsibility and move forward with it."

The only other point I want to make on this is that we cannot forget the human dimension of this issue. I don't think there's a member of this assembly, and probably not a member of the public who might be watching this debate, who hasn't been touched in some way by this issue, either by a person within our family or a close friend or an acquaintance who has died or been injured as a result of a drunk driver, so everybody knows of a case where this has happened.

That's really the scary part. When we all know somebody who has been involved in a motor vehicle accident because of drunk driving, it tells us we have a pretty serious problem out there. We can't forget the human dimension of what this means to the survivors or victims, should they survive this particular kind of accident that really is not necessary. There are enough accidents on our highways. We don't need to be contributing and adding to them by virtue of having drunk drivers on our highways, endangering the pedestrians and other people travelling on our highways.

I think what the member for Kitchener is trying to do is a step in the right direction. I'm not sure the federal

government will agree with the member in saying that on the first offence there should be incarceration of one to seven days.

Mr Baird: Alexa will, Prime Minister McDonough will.

Mr Bisson: I thought we were not going to get too partisan here.

The only thing I want to say to the member for Kitchener is that I'm not convinced the federal Parliament will say that on first offence you will incarcerate. I think the federal Parliament will more likely say: "The governments of Ontario and other provinces have extended suspensions for first and second offences, and eventually withdrawals of licences, and only in cases of criminal negligence and in the cases of second offences or a person leaving and driving while under suspension" — I think the federal government, in that case, no matter what the political stripe, would probably take heed of what you're trying to do through this motion and say that in those particular cases incarceration might be the answer. We should put that cautionary note out there and say this is a step in the right direction. I'm not convinced the federal government will go as far.

The last thing, I'll come back to the same point. It's a good example, in this motion, of how we need to ensure that we do have people in Ottawa who are speaking up for the interests of Canadians. One of the things that's happening in our federal Parliament today, with nothing but a bunch of Liberals, Tories, Reformers and the Bloc Québécois, is that there really isn't a voice there to keep those Liberals honest in Ottawa. I would urge people to remember that on election day, and what Alexa McDonough is saying on the federal parties.

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): The timing for this debate is excellent as we are approaching the Victoria Day weekend, also known as May two-four by many young beer drinkers in Ontario, one of the warm weather holiday weekends that result in most of our drunk driving crashes in Ontario.

Drinking and driving is a complex problem that defies simple solutions. It involves two extremely common activities: the operation of a motor vehicle, boat or snowmobile, for example, and the consumption of alcohol. By virtue of sheer number of people involved and the frequency with which they engage in these behaviours, it is not surprising that we have a drunk driving problem in Ontario.

Over the years it has become increasingly apparent that no one countermeasure program or policy will eliminate the problem. The search for new solutions must recognize the complexity of the issues in attempting to changed well-entrenched patterns of behaviour.

1140

I've worked to try and decrease drinking and driving for over 20 years now and I'm encouraged by the intent of this resolution, as well as the track record to date of the government of Ontario. Much of my work has been through Citizens Against Drinking and Driving, the Brant/Brantford drinking driving countermeasures committee and the Addiction Research Foundation.

Legal sanctions such as jail sentences administered by the courts are central to deterrence-based policies for

reducing alcohol-impaired driving. Other examples are fines, licence suspensions, community service. These sanctions will be effective in modifying behaviour to the extent that they are perceived in three ways: as being certain, swiftly applied and severe.

These three primary characteristics, being certain, swift and severe, have proven potential to reduce drunk driving. I feel the impact of any sanction on the general driving public is much more important than its impact on the offenders who are punished. Programs that result in reduced recidivism by those who are punished are worthwhile. However, without having some impact on the total population of drinking drivers, particularly those people who don't get caught, such programs cannot have a major impact on drunk driving and its consequences for people in Ontario. Thus the importance, as I see it, of enforcement, coupled with education and coupled with other measures, seat belt use, for example.

Confinement for drunk drivers is traditionally in jails. However, the use of alternative confinement sites, including the offenders' homes, is increasing. This is due in large part to the inability of jails to handle large numbers of drunk drivers. The use of prison sentences for drinking drivers has been part of Scandinavian law for more than 50 years. In North America, it has been used much less frequently, although interest in the use of such penalties has increased in recent years. In my opinion, such penalties may provide needed shock value for first-time offenders.

I concur with this motion proposed by my friend from Kitchener that legal sanctions and jail terms are important in reducing drunk-driving behaviour.

For 10 years I went into Burtch Correctional Centre on a monthly basis and talked to groups of inmates who were locked up for drunk driving. I would ask their advice on prevention, especially with respect to younger people, and I was often told that if they had received a week or two in jail on their first offence when they were younger, they felt they would not now be doing two years less a day. For that reason, my experience at Burtch, I support jail sentences for early offences as a preventive measure. Jail terms have a proven effect. However, people are still driving drunk and this suggests that jail terms must be combined with other measures. We must also recognize the cost of enforcement — police, courts — and social and economic costs of increased surveillance by the criminal justice system.

To continue to broaden our horizons in our quest to reduce drunk driving, we should embrace a global approach. Under this broader approach a number of different countermeasures could be considered in that combined efforts are more successful than individualistic approaches. We must acknowledge the value of the stick combined with the carrot. The stick — for example, jail terms — is a proven method of deterrence, but we should recognize that it need not be the only method used.

Its success can be augmented by many new developing approaches: improvements in vehicle design, energy-absorbing steering assemblies to reduce chest injuries, for example, and better road design. There's work being done on alcohol safety interlock systems for vehicle ignitions and this has a potential for prevention. High-intensity

spot checks are very successful in Ontario, improved police training, and continuing to get the word out that you can go to jail if you drive drunk.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm pleased to make a contribution to this debate this morning. I want to begin, however, by mentioning the difference between two resolutions or two bills, two initiatives that have been taken.

The member for Mississauga South brought forward her legislative initiative, and it was exclusively within the jurisdiction of the provincial government. I have seen, and it's not simply during this session or anything else, a penchant among some members of the Legislature of all parties, at different times, for wanting to point to some other government to do something, a federal or a local or an international government to do something.

I've always felt that the best resolutions or bills are those which are exclusively within the purview of this Legislature, because it compels the government in power, whatever government it is at Queen's Park, to make a decision whether it's going to proceed with that legislation or not.

This piece of legislation or this resolution is helpful, I think, in terms of particularly the shock value of it to people. It will shock them into recognizing the significance of driving which is considered to be unacceptable by our society. Nevertheless, if I want to contrast it with the member for Mississauga South, hers was strictly within the purview of the provincial government and therefore really said to members of the Legislature: "Here is something we can do. We have a direct effect on this. We don't have to point a finger somewhere else or ask somebody else. We are dealing with a matter under provincial jurisdiction."

I was enthusiastic about the bill proposed by the member for Mississauga South not only for the reason that the contents of the bill were good, but also the fact that it was under exclusively provincial jurisdiction. I happen to believe — and perhaps you'll chastise me some time if I ever bring forward a resolution or a bill that does not fit this category — that what we should be dealing with in this House are matters exclusively under the purview of the provincial government.

I think the issue is a significant one, I must say. If you look at the European experience, the level of tolerance of impaired driving in Europe is next to zero in some countries, even countries which have perhaps a worse record in terms of the consumption of alcohol. The rules for the operation of vehicles related to that are rather strict, much stricter than we have, generally speaking, in North America.

The other provision which is useful but has to be enforced is the provision of the removal of the right to drive. When people yield that right, that is rather significant in terms of their ability to enjoy recreation, to enjoy pleasurable events or, most importantly, to enjoy the opportunity to be able to drive back and forth to work, particularly if a person's job depends on the operation of a vehicle.

So I think that whenever we deal with matters of this kind, they are important matters, they are initiatives that deserve support of members of this assembly. I only

wish, when we are dealing with these matters, that we would deal with those under provincial jurisdiction and that we encourage our federal colleagues of whatever political party to bring forward this kind of initiative within the purview of the federal House of Commons, where it can be dealt with appropriately.

But I'm sure there will be widespread support for this initiative. I intend to vote for it. I'm sure many in our province would be in support of this initiative.

Mr Baird: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and address this resolution brought forward by my colleague the member for Kitchener. I would at the outset like to commend him for all of his effort and dedication on this very important issue. I know his interest in the safety of his community and on this issue is long-standing and I congratulate him for his efforts.

I also congratulate Margaret Marland, the member for Mississauga South. She has certainly worked hard on this issue, as has the Minister of Transportation, Al Palladini, in bringing in the administrative licence suspension.

Drunk driving causes a great deal of concern for people in my constituency in Nepean. A good number of local tragedies have got the public extremely concerned. But the problem when a local tragedy happens and it gets people concerned and outraged and upset and they express that anger and that demand for action, that clarion call for action, is that it then dies down and the issue goes away, only to rear its head a number of months later, a number of years later. That's why I've taken it as an issue to constantly be presenting petitions, constantly raising this issue, and do enjoy the opportunity to bring those views forward, because this is not an issue that's going to go away. I had a town hall meeting on this issue and 250 people came out to hear the member for Mississauga South speak on this issue because it's so important for the public in my constituency.

1150

I encouraged the member for Kitchener with support on this resolution. It deals with the federal House. We're dealing with everything we can do on the provincial level. We have had the administrative licence suspension, this House passed through second reading Mrs Marland's bill on drunk driving, and the Minister of Transportation has brought one bill forward and has indicated he'll be moving on another initiative. What this is suggesting, in a very non-partisan way, is to put on record the views of this House and encourage the next federal Parliament to act, because they haven't done a lot of action in recent years and I think that's regrettable. As a matter of fact, we looked through the Legislative Assembly and we couldn't find one time when the federal government had brought forward an initiative. Maybe there is one; we couldn't find one in the last three and a half years.

My colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands brought two issues up in his comments that I agreed with and wanted to discuss. He said, "We've come a long way." I would agree with my colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands on that. We've come a long way, but there is much further we have to go. We've got to continue to put pressure, continue to clearly demonstrate that as a society we're not going to tolerate this type of behaviour.

The member's resolution particularly merits support in my judgement for the components it contains on second and repeat offences, wanting to put in stricter offences for repeat offenders, which I think is where the crux is: 65% of charges are repeat offenders. Those people aren't getting the message. The Highway Traffic Act doesn't deal with them. What the member for Kitchener is saying by this resolution, in my judgement, is: "This is not a social problem; this is a criminal problem. These are acts committed by criminals. The results of their criminal activity have victims, and these victims have families and these victims deserve some justice." I commend the member for wanting to seek that.

The member for Kingston and The Islands also said that people must realize the significance of their actions. When we see that 65% of charges are repeat offenders, we know that people obviously don't realize the significance of their offences. Maybe a few days, a week, or 60 days on a second offence, as a minimum, would allow them the opportunity to reflect on their criminal behaviour. I think that certainly is very important in this.

We've got to look at drunk driving. It's the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada. Every 45 minutes, a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash. The member for Kitchener talked about the statistical yearbook put out by the Ministry of the Attorney General. There are a lot of families and a lot of parents out there who — this document, with all its facts and figures, there are no pictures in it. That is in my judgement regrettable because the actions of these criminals have a consequence and they deserve to be and must be addressed by the people's representatives in the province of Ontario. I think that's very important, certainly with what I've heard in my constituency.

Education is important, but to an extent. If 65% of the cases are repeat offences, obviously education is not enough; obviously tougher actions are required. We can't pass changes to the Criminal Code in this House. That's why I appreciate the member bringing forward this important issue so that we can address it at the federal level.

Lastly, I would just encourage everyone watching on television to go to the all-candidates' meeting in your constituency. When the candidates of all parties come to the door, ask them where they stand on this issue, ask them what specific commitments they're going to make to you, and then hold them accountable for that, because this issue must be dealt with by the Criminal Code, and that is very important. I think it's important that this be dealt with as a criminal problem, not a social problem.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to rise today in support of the member for Kitchener's resolution on the state of impaired driving in Ontario. I want to first state I'm very clearly in support of this resolution. I've had certainly in the last week a change of mind on this, because originally I felt that the Minister of Transportation's administrative licence suspension, which was just recently introduced, was a very severe signal and warning for those who would be driving under the influence. However, listening to a program yesterday on CFRB radio really brought home to me that someone can drive and can actually kill someone and not have to pay a serious consequence for it.

I think if we really want to be serious and put some real teeth into the enforcement of impaired driving, this very clearly sends a signal that you're going to do time, and this time would be the appropriate time to learn the consequences for their actions. I don't think it's too harsh. I think of all the work that's gone into it by the Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving or Mothers Against Drunk Driving. They need the support of this resolution from the member for Kitchener.

When I listened, in other jurisdictions they have an incarceration period, and I think that's the reminder that is critical. Before you get behind the wheel of a car, if you're impaired, there's a serious message here in this discussion today.

I'm going to leave the remainder of my time to one of the other members, but keep in mind that impaired driving is not acceptable.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'm very delighted to join on this historic occasion with the member for Kitchener and his presentation this morning of the problem of drinking drivers and the tragic consequences arising out of their irresponsible actions. On behalf of Transportation Minister Al Palladini, we want to respond in the transportation ministry and agree vigorously with the proposal in the resolution presented by the member for Kitchener.

The member for Kitchener raises concerns in an area that should have been dealt with for many, many years, and this government has undertaken significant initiatives in that particular area. Our concern is shared with the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving, which includes representatives from such groups as Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving. We've come to the conclusion, from listening to a lot of people on this subject, from law enforcement officers to family members to loved ones to the judiciary, that we need to undertake specific inclusive, comprehensive measures in this area.

The Ministry of Transportation of Ontario has done so through its road safety plan. Although the plan is only 18 months old, we've made several significant advances in road safety. The first one I'd like to mention is the 90-day suspension that is invoked before the offender leaves the police station. While the administrative driver's licence suspension program is relatively new and has been in effect since last December, we have made some surprising gains in this area, if you look at it in that context. Under the ADLS, in its first weekend of operation from November 29, 1996, and into December, there were 303 Ontario drivers who had to serve a 90-day driver's licence suspension. Since that time we've chalked up, in five months, 8,832 drivers who have had administrative driving suspensions undertaken.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Kitchener has two minutes to reply.

Mr Wettlaufer: I would like to thank all the members who participated in the debate today: the members for Kingston and The Islands, Hamilton Centre, Windsor-Sandwich, Cochrane South, St Catharines, and my colleagues in the government from Norfolk, Nepean, Durham East and Etobicoke-Rexdale. I thank them all for their support. I appreciate it very much. I especially want

to thank the PA for transportation because that indicates to me the ministry is in favour. With that kind of power behind us, I think we can carry this to the federal government. Thank you very much.

MEDICINE AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MÉDECINS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with ballot item number 75. If there are members who are opposed to a vote on this at this time, will they please rise.

Mr Kwinter has moved second reading of Bill 126, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, 1991. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Shall the bill be referred to a committee?

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): General government.

The Acting Speaker: Does a majority of the House agree that this should be referred to the general government committee? It is agreed.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal now with ballot item number 76, standing in the name of Mr Wettlaufer. If there are any members opposed to a vote being taken at this time, will they please rise.

Is it the wish of the House the resolution carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Wettlaufer has moved private member's notice of motion number 50. All those in favour please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Gerretsen, John	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Gravelle, Michael	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Grimmett, Bill	Parker, John L.
Bisson, Gilles	Hastings, John	Pettit, Trevor
Boushy, Dave	Kells, Morley	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Brown, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Christopherson, David	Laughren, Floyd	Shea, Derwyn
Colle, Mike	Leach, Al	Sheehan, Frank
Cordiano, Joseph	Leadston, Gary L.	Smith, Bruce
Doyle, Ed	Marland, Margaret	Spina, Joseph
Elliott, Brenda	Martin, Tony	Stewart, R. Gary
Fisher, Barbara	McLean, Allan K.	Turnbull, David
Fox, Gary	Miclash, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the resolution carried.

All matters relating to private members' business having now been completed, I do leave the chair. This House is adjourned until 1:30 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1331.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BUDGET

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): The budget presented by the government May 6 has failed totally and miserably to recognize and address the very special needs of a very special group in our society: our seniors. A very large and fast-growing group, hit with copayment and user fees, our seniors are once again being neglected and forgotten by their own government. Another bitter pill to swallow.

Thousands upon thousands of our seniors, the sick and the elderly, the old living on a single measly pension, the seniors in need of a nursing home bed, the seniors who are forced to pay for the government's tax cuts, the seniors who will have to decide: pay rent, buy prescriptions or buy food — the minister has unfortunately forgotten the seniors.

In your budget there is no better tomorrow for our seniors. You are colour-blind. Their future is not rosy; it's very grim and bleak. Shame on you for failing to address the seniors' needs. This is not the way to recognize our seniors.

Minister, you had the opportunity to remove copayments and user fees, and you have once again failed our seniors miserably. Shame on you.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): The claim in the budget that this Conservative government will spend more money on health care this year is quickly unraveling, and so too is the claim that this money will go to patient care.

The Ontario Medical Association issued a press release yesterday which blew apart the government's spin. Dr Rowland, president of the association, said, "The Conservative government's claim in the budget that more money is going into health care is misleading." He noted that this government came to its final budget figure by adding together the operating budget of the Ministry of Health, plus one-time restructuring and capital costs associated with this government's hospital closures. In looking at the money that has been lumped together to form the larger budget figure, Dr Rowland said, "Either way, there's really no additional money for patient care in Ontario."

For good measure, so the Minister of Health gets the message, Dr Rowland also said: "There has been no tangible increase in health care spending in 1997-98 despite the increasing health care needs of the population. I see nothing in this budget to reassure patients that access to care will be any better this year."

It's also worth adding that health care spending per person this year will be less than last year. The one-time funding for health care which appears in the budget is to pay for severance packages for the thousands of nurses who are going out the door and for the capital costs for

the single hospitals which will be left after the government closures. The announcement to delay cuts already announced is clearly a sign that the government has gone too far. Too bad the budget claim on health care is nothing but smoke and mirrors.

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): Earlier this year, I sent out a questionnaire to business owners in my riding of Wentworth East. With the Minister of Finance having delivered his new budget on Tuesday, I'd like to report the very timely results of my survey to the House at this time.

For the business people of my riding, these are very positive and hopeful times. One of the questions I asked business people was to identify what the greatest negative impact was on their willingness or their ability to increase employment in their firms. Over 60% of the respondents said that taxes are the biggest deterrent to job creation in this province.

I think my constituents will find solace in the fact that the finance minister's budget not only continued to cut income tax rates, but the budget included a total of 20 tax cuts, and you and I both know, Mr Speaker, that tax cuts create jobs. This budget will mean more good news for the job creators of my riding.

Another question I asked business people was to rate their likelihood to hire new employees in the next 18 months: 44%, almost half of the business owners in Wentworth East, stated that they intend to hire new employees to create more jobs for constituents. People in my riding know that our plan is working, and because of it there will soon be more people working as well.

People who responded to my survey strongly urged this government to stay the course, continue to cut taxes and government spending, and to improve the climate for creating jobs in this province. I thank all those who took part in the survey.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): My statement today is directed towards the Minister of Health, and I would like to ask a page to deliver this letter to the minister.

The story is about two very young constituents of mine. Two-and-a-half-year-old Peter Navratils and his eight-month-old sister Avery have both been diagnosed with a very rare skin disease known as xeroderma pigmentosum, XP, for short, a rare condition that affects less than 1,000 people worldwide.

What XP means is that these small children have an extremely high sensitivity to UV rays to the point where their skin burns within minutes of exposure to sunlight. This disease dramatically raises the risk that Peter and Avery will go blind, deaf or experience neurological problems. They are predisposed to cancer, and most children who are born with this condition do not live past their 18th birthday.

Peter and Avery need protective clothing, glasses and frequent applications of the highest sunblock in their home. They also need a triple laminate coating for their windows to provide a protective barrier between them and the sun, and a light meter for their home, because even the windows cannot fully protect them.

These measures are aimed at giving Peter and Avery the most normal childhood. The problem is that I've been informed that while the assistive devices program was established to provide supplies for Ontarians with long-term disabilities, this program does not cover most of these needed expenses, particularly the vital coating for the windows or the light meter.

We have a responsibility to help the vulnerable children in this province, and I'm calling on the Minister of Health to help the Navratils. Find the flexibility in the ADP to help these children live the healthiest, longest and most normal lives possible.

NON-TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): This morning I had an opportunity to participate in the debate on a private member's bill sponsored by the member for Wilson Heights. The piece of legislation he proposes deals with alternative medicine and ensuring that practitioners of alternative medicine have an opportunity to do so as long as it is consistent with good patient care in a way that is free from harassment by the medical establishment in the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

I can't tell you how important I think this kind of legislative initiative is and I am fully supportive of it. I'm also pleased that the members of the Legislature, in all three parties, supported this bill in principle.

I heard some members of the government caucus caution that they had problems with the wording and that there were some more restrictions and/or cautions that need to be built in to it. Fair enough. Let me tell you how to do it.

Now that it has passed second reading and it has been ordered for committee, it's up to the government to ensure that it doesn't die on the order table, that it's actually called. The Minister of Health can take ownership of this, either by introducing a government bill or by working with the member for Wilson Heights to improve the legislation to meet the concerns that have been expressed by some in the field and to make sure it comes to committee so there can be full public hearings.

I remind the government caucus, the Conservatives in this House, that I, as Minister of Health, worked with one of their members to do just that with a private member's bill and helped her see it through to legislation. Jim Wilson should do the same.

1340

BARBARA TURNBULL

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Some events in our lives are so shocking that we will always remember where we were when we heard the news. For me, one of those days was September 23, 1983, when I learned that my constituent, Barbara Turnbull, an 18-year-old student, had been shot that night during a robbery at a local convenience store where she worked.

We soon learned that while Barbara would live, she would be paralysed from the neck down. Her doctors predicted that she would always be reliant on a lung machine. But the strength of Barbara's personality soon became obvious. Not only did she recover her ability to

breathe, but she went on to graduate in 1990 with a BA in journalism from Arizona State University. An exceptional student, Barbara graduated with high academic honours and was selected as her class valedictorian.

Since then we have enjoyed Barbara's talented writing in the *Toronto Star*. Now she has published an autobiography, *Looking in the Mirror*, about the tragedy that changed her life and the road back from that dark time. I was honoured to be invited to the official launching of Barbara's book on April 23, 1997, published by the *Toronto Star*.

There can be no stronger testimony to the strength of the human spirit than Barbara's determination to make the most of the many gifts she has to offer our society. Her courage, wisdom and love for life are truly an inspiration to us all.

I invite all members in this House to join me in congratulating Barbara on the publication of her book and wishing her the very best in all her future endeavours.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Mike Harris and Al Leach are continuing to spin doctor that municipalities are happy with the new downloading arrangements with the province.

Whereas municipalities are certainly better off than the \$1 billion of additional downloading that Mike Harris forced on them earlier, the new scheme will still cost Ontario property taxpayers more in property taxes than it currently does. Why else would Mike Harris and Al Leach not guarantee local property taxpayers that they will not be paying more as a result of the new funding arrangements?

In addition to the municipal support grant of \$667 million that municipalities were cut off from last year, there will be at least another \$600 million that will be downloaded on municipalities this year. No, Premier, municipalities and local taxpayers are not happy with the new downloading, as municipalities will now have to pay for 100% of social housing in their cities, ferries, airports, sewer and water inspections, police, farm property tax rebate systems, property assessors, libraries, public health including health units, and land ambulances.

We are already hearing from municipalities that they will have to increase their property taxes by as much as 10% or 20% to provide the same services they did last year. Mike Harris, in order to pay for your tax cut, you would have been better off if you'd left the funding arrangements to the municipalities alone.

SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): The government made a very big deal out of the increase of \$27 million over the next four years to support women and their families who are trying to break the cycle of violence.

This particular item in the budget points out as no other the hypocrisy that's involved in the spin this government is trying to put on its budget. The reality is that the cuts this government has already made to services that had been proven to be effective in assisting those who are trying to escape violence in their lives, to

become self-sufficient and safe in our communities, is many times the number of dollars this government has announced with so much fanfare.

The whole field of violence against women and children has been one to which successive governments in this province, until this particular government, have devoted more and more time and energy, because they recognized the real problem both in dollars and cents and in human misery that is caused by the ongoing violence that occurs in families.

For this government to attempt to portray itself in this budget as if it were joining in the real efforts to help women and children in a position of violence is hypocrisy of the worst level and it will not be accepted by —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

PITCH-IN WEEK

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Thank you for the opportunity to remind the members of this Legislature about Pitch-In Week, now taking place in hundreds of communities in Ontario and across Canada.

Pitch-In Week is now in its 29th year in some parts of Canada. This has become a tradition and is a testament to a very powerful idea: Cleaning up the world begins with individual action.

This week more than two million individuals are putting this idea into action. More than 2,500 organizations are involved, from local governments, community organizations and chambers of commerce to environmental groups, service clubs, schools, youth groups and seniors' groups. Together they are pitching in by reducing, reusing and recycling; by cleaning up waterways and highways; by removing garbage from school yards and parks, resulting in cleaner and healthier communities.

The organization of this week's activities, Pitch-In Canada, deserves our thanks for a job well done. I should also note that among the partners involved are Scouts Canada, Friends of the Environment and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

I know that all of my colleagues in this Legislature share my desire to see a cleaner and healthier environment. I encourage all of you to get behind the great work being done in your communities. I encourage you to pitch in and help.

ORAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): I have a question for the Minister of Education. Today I want to talk about what's really happening to students in Ontario who want to go to college or university. It's now clear to everyone, Minister, that you're giving up on our students who need you the most. You've just closed the door on 5,000 part-time students, who are now ineligible for Ontario student loans because you've increased course-load requirements.

This is nothing short of ridiculous. On the one hand, you forced universities to boost tuition fees by about 20%. Now you're telling desperate students that they're

out of luck, that this government won't help them. How can anyone believe you when you say you want to ensure that our universities and colleges remain accessible? What do you say to those 5,000 students who won't be able to earn an education as a result of these changes?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I would suggest the member opposite perhaps spend a little more time with his research staff. He will find out, if he talks with his research staff, that Ontario has since 1978 had the provisions of the Ontario student assistance program meet the federal regulations. He will notice that those federal regulations changed between 1978 and now, several times, and Ontario has matched those requirements.

The last series of changes the federal government brought into its package, which we have now adjusted to, happened during the tenure of the previous government in 1994. There were consultations across Canada on those regulations, including consultations with Ontario students, with the Ontario universities and, I assume, with the Ministry of Education under the previous government. So Ontario has moved to be consistent with the federal package of loan programs for students.

Mr Cordiano: Minister, you're the one who has given Ontario's universities and colleges the lowest funding in this country. That's how you show your commitment to accessible post-secondary education? You're the one who told people collecting family benefits that they could get student loans only if they went to university part-time. Now you're cutting most of those people off completely. The message is very clear: If you want an education, you have to buy it; if you can't afford it, tough luck.

That's not what Ontario has been all about. This province has been a success because we've given people the opportunity to succeed. Time and again, government after government has done that. Why are you cutting off those opportunities to our students? Why are you doing that?

Hon Mr Snobelen: It's very awkward to stand here today and again refer the honourable member opposite to his research staff, who have obviously failed him again today. He will find that Ontario part-time students are eligible, as are students in the other nine provinces, for the part-time Canada student loans program. That is the program they access for loans to participate in Ontario universities on a part-time basis, as they do in nine other provinces. By the way, Ontario, under this government, was the last province to adopt these federal regulations and federal standards. So I suggest to the member opposite, please, sir, do your research, have your people prepare the right information, so that you are informed when you ask the question.

This government's record on post-secondary education is obvious. We have put together a fund for students most at risk that, as the Minister of Finance announced the other day, amounts to half a billion dollars and will assist 166,000 students in this province over the next 10 years. The universities are excited about it, we're excited about it, and so are the students.

1350

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary, the member for Scarborough North.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Today is a sad day for those seeking part-time studies who need OSAP, and the minister knows that, because today the minister changed the definition of part-time studies to mean 60% of full-time course load. For those part-time students, their goals are much farther away. These changes mean that students will have to carry no less than three courses a week in order to be eligible for any OSAP. This is awful, and I hope you'll take another look at your sneaky assessment changes and make the necessary changes.

I quote from Dr Robert Prichard, president of the University of Toronto, who said, "If we expect students to combine part-time study with their other responsibilities, we must give those in need the same key provisions that we give full-time students." Minister, wouldn't you agree?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I know the member for Scarborough North is usually well researched, so he must be using someone else's research material. For the record, and so this is very clear for the people of Ontario, part-time students will access a different program, a federal program, for support. In fact, that program has less stringent qualifications than the program it replaces. That means — and I know the member for Scarborough North will be pleased to hear this — that more people will be eligible for more loans as part-time students under this new program. I think that's a real win for students.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I want to talk to you about some people I asked you about before the budget. I asked you and I asked the Premier about a number of tragic situations that have occurred in this province, and they're depending on your answers. They're depending on knowing when this budget came out whether the health system can possibly get better as a result of what you've done.

I wonder if you would please address the fact that you said yesterday in this House you were putting \$400 million more this year into operating, and the fact is the amount of money in operation is \$17.845 billion and that compares with \$17.844 billion for last year. It's \$1 million, and it's probably less money than you're spending on the ads that you put in the Globe and Mail today in phoney advertising for this budget.

Will you please stand up today and admit that no more money is going towards patient care as a result of your budget and in fact it is being cut?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member keeps harping on a theme that no one in the rest of the province believes. Most people understand that we inherited a health care operating budget of \$17.4 billion and that the budget is up to \$17.8 billion. That's a \$400-million increase, and all of that money has gone into expanding patient services.

In addition, the finance minister has announced over \$2 billion to be spent on restructuring, on top of the

\$17.8 billion, over the next few years, to ensure that patient services are maintained and enhanced. It's a heck of a lot better than the Liberal's campaign promise in 1995 of \$17 billion, which would be \$800 million less than we're spending today.

Finally, I ask all honourable members to keep in mind that we've had to do some dramatic restructuring in government and cut government overhead and red tape by 32%, and all of that money and more has gone into an enhanced health care budget for the good expansion of services that's occurring across the province.

Mr Kennedy: I hope your back bench was listening to that, because in every one of their communities hospitals are being cut. We talked the other day about a young girl who had to be brought to four hospitals before she could get emergency care in Niagara region, four hospitals you had cut by some millions of dollars, and a young father who had a three-day-old son die at Sick Kids, which you have cut by \$22 million, yet you have the audacity to stand here today and talk in the abstract about what you've done.

This year, people want to know, will it get better? They may not be listening to you and they may be listening instead to the Ontario Medical Association. The headline of their release says, "Ontario Budget Misleading on Health Care Funding." That's their headline. You need to respond and say whether or not the president, Gerry Rowland, is right when he says, just looking at your figures, when you take in the total amount of spending, which is how you're trying to portray this, there's \$339 million less being spent on health care this year, so those patients who have suffered this year can look forward to things getting worse.

Minister, stand in your place and admit, at least, you've got work to do.

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member again is wrong. All the facts point to, and the audited facts point to, the fact that the health care budget is up \$400 million in spite of a \$2.1-billion cut in transfers from the federal Liberal government.

Let's talk about the new services that the Health Services Restructuring Commission is recommending across the province in its final directives and its interim directives. It says in Thunder Bay, for example — and we have already made these reinvestments — \$2 million to \$2.3 million in transitional care to be added to the system, \$2.4 million in home care, \$1 million to operate the new MRI which will be placed in Thunder Bay, \$1.2 million for adolescent mental health, \$3 million to \$4 million for specialist recruitment. In Sudbury, \$2.8 million to \$3.2 million for subacute new transitional care beds, \$1.2 million for home care, \$3.3 million to recruit and retain new physicians, \$1.9 million for repatriation of hospital services to the Sudbury region, and the list goes on and on. That's what that \$2 billion in restructuring is for: more services to serve more patients.

Mr Kennedy: The threat to health care in days gone by was from people who used to go around selling unproven potions, flim-flam people who came to town. These days the snake oil comes in the form of figures that are announced over and over again and health care that's not delivered to people who are sick.

Minister, I'm going to ask you a very simple question on behalf of the Wa-li Akhras family, the father of the young son who died; on behalf of the Tymchyshyn family, a 57-year-old man who spent five hours in an emergency room and collapsed and died in the parking lot because he couldn't get served in Jim Wilson's health care Ontario. They want you to answer this question straight: Have you or have you not cut in this fiscal year, which is what this budget is about, \$400 million to this province's hospitals and made that downgrade in patient care unavoidable for the hospitals and the health care workers in this province? Answer the question, Minister.

Hon Mr Wilson: I'll take the honourable member back to what the Ontario Nurses' Association has been saying as they speak in favour of restructuring across this province. They have said to members in this Legislature for years that there's at least 30% waste and duplication and excessive administrative costs in the hospital system. We've said no, we don't think it's that high.

The commission has found about \$1.1 billion worth of savings and we have been reinvesting all of that money and more back into the health care system so that by this time next year we should have the shortest waiting lists in cardiac care and for cardiac surgery. The nurses and doctors are working overtime on weekends now. We'll have more dialysis services. There are 23 new clinics up and running that weren't in existence last year. We have more hip and knee operations. We have a coordinated and enhanced cancer system with millions of new dollars being put in it, a women's institute now announced —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: — which will add about \$10 million into research on women's health care. All of that is reinvestments and it's far more money, it's two and a half times more money than we've seen in —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question, leader of the third party.

1400

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Minister of Health: Yesterday you tried to say that \$450 million has been added to the patient care budget in the Ministry of Health. You tried to say that money which is actually going to be spent for laying off nurses and money which will be spent to close hospitals somehow is going to help patient care.

When the Ontario Medical Association heard about your feeble attempt, this is what they said. This is Dr Gerry Rowland, representing Ontario doctors: "The Ontario government's claim that yesterday's budget puts more money into health care is misleading and it does not address current problems caused by cuts in previous years.... The amount of money being spent on patient care has been increased by only \$1 million — about the same amount of money the government spent on TV ads to tell Ontarians not to worry about...health care."

Minister, will you come clean? Will you admit what everyone else knows? You can't count money spent on laying off nurses as money for patient care.

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member isn't correct. Dr Gerry Rowland knows full well that one of the major reasons the health care budget is up to \$17.8 billion is that physicians, as part of the interim agreement

that's been signed by the government, will receive about \$300 million more, or 7% more, for the services they're rendering in the province. I doubt very much the Ontario Medical Association is saying there isn't more money in health care, because the physicians who are performing services for patients are being reimbursed for that. We're getting away from the clawbacks and the draconian measures that you took in office and we're putting new money in the system to help physicians meet the patient demand out there. With the interim agreement — that's about \$300 million, and it's one of the major reasons the health care budget is up.

Mr Hampton: This minister is incredible. Everybody else in the province is wrong but him. This is the title of their press release: "Ontario Budget Misleading on Health Care Spending." He goes on to say you can't count the money that is spent to throw nurses out the door as money spent on patient care. He's clear about that. You can't call money spent on closing hospitals money devoted to patient care.

At the same time you were trying to string this story yesterday, we found out that the only agency that deals with health care retraining, with taking nurses who have been laid off and giving them training so they can fit in somewhere else in the system, was told it's no longer in existence by your deputy minister. The Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel was terminated by your government.

Minister, admit what everybody else knows. There is nothing here for retraining, there is nothing here for patient care. This is all about how much it's going to cost to lay off nurses and close hospitals. Admit it.

Hon Mr Wilson: In addition to the \$440-million increase in operating funding for the Ministry of Health, we are providing \$2 billion for retraining, new services and capital costs. The Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel was not put out of business yesterday. They have been asked to compete on the same basis as community colleges, other non-profit groups and agencies that provide retraining.

Hospitals will have access to that \$2 billion as their employees need retraining for the thousands of new jobs that are occurring on the community-based side in home care and home services. As people retrain for those jobs — \$2 billion is the fund, much of it available for retraining — hospitals will purchase from the highest quality, best-price agencies, including HSTAP if it chooses to stay in the business of brokering training dollars in this province.

The Speaker: Final supplementary, member for London Centre.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): This minister just gets more unbelievable all the time. First of all, he tells us that \$300 million is going to pay doctors, at the same time that he's simply sloughing off the fact that 1,250 other health care workers a month have been going to HSTAP to get assistance in terms of training and placement; 1,250 people a month who look to this organization as the group which is going to help them, which is focused on placing them in this field and will help them to find new jobs.

Health care workers, as you know, Minister, are being laid off now and have been laid off in increasing numbers over the last months. When you do get to restructuring, when the rubber finally hits the road on this so-called restructuring plan, you're going to find that you've lost every hope you had of coordination. You've lost the central job registry, you've lost any ability for planned and coordinated redeployment. As Dr Rowland said, just like there's no additional money, there's no plan. What do you say to that?

Hon Mr Wilson: There is a plan. This \$2 billion of extra money on top of the \$17.8 billion provides for significant retraining and new services for patients and capital costs. HSTAP, the Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel, will I hope take up the offer to be out there competing with community colleges, with other brokerage agencies on a highest-quality, best-price basis.

The hospitals themselves now will pool together to purchase services and we have a commitment from the Ontario Hospital Association that they will be working very quickly to expedite the processing of claims. Any claims received by HSTAP up to this point will be fully honoured and people will receive their retraining dollars.

There was a real need to ensure that we're getting the best bang for our dollar in terms of retraining. Hospitals themselves have agreed to this, and other agencies like nursing homes and other agencies in the health care system that will undergo some restructuring will also have access to the \$2 billion.

The Speaker: New question. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. He's just stepped out, so I'd ask that we be able to stand it down.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. On June 4, 1995, Mike Harris said, "I don't think you'll find a cent there cut out of the environment. We'll be able to find \$6 million in cuts without cutting the environment."

Minister, on Tuesday the budget cut an additional \$10 million out of the operating budget for the upcoming year. That brings it to \$121 million since your government has taken office that you have cut out of the Ministry of the Environment. You have sacrificed the quality of air in Ontario. You're sacrificing peoples' lives.

By your own admission, you said 1,800 Ontarians die prematurely every year as a result of poor air quality. Those were your words, Minister, your comments. The federal Minister of the Environment has stated that \$365 million a year in additional health care costs in Ontario are attributed to poor air quality. We have problems with benzene. PM-10 in my own community causes 25 deaths a year, and we have brought that to your attention once again. In view of the alarming statistics and the crisis you have created, how can you continue to cut the Ministry of Environment and sacrifice air quality in Ontario?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): As many of us know, a lot of our air quality problems relate to what comes across the boundaries from the United States. I have urged the federal minister, whom he refers to, to take a more proactive stance with

regard to encouraging the federal EPA to take some stiff positions with regard to the trans-border emissions that we get from the United States.

In fact in Windsor, 90% of the problems come from across the border. It's after my lead in intervening with regard to the EPA that the federal minister decided to intervene as well. We are looking out for air quality for the people of Ontario like no other provincial government has before. We are urging our federal government to take a proactive stance, which they have refused to do in the past and only followed the lead of the provincial Minister of Environment. We are doing all we can within our borders. We are also doing all we can outside our borders.

Mr Agostino: Minister, what you have shown is a gutless lack of leadership when it comes to environmental standards. Let me tell you what you have done. You have cut the staff by 30%, 720 employees, since your government took office. You have cut air monitoring stations by 39%. You have closed 92 air monitoring stations in Ontario. You have left 13 communities without air monitoring stations. On 20 separate occasions your government has committed to vehicle emission testing programs, and what have we seen? Rhetoric and trips to the United States.

Minister, you have not brought in standards for cancer-causing agents such as benzene. You have continued to let down Ontarians day after day. You have classified odour and dust as nuisance complaints. Those have been your actions, a shameless record. Don't blame the United States, don't blame the federal government. You're in charge. You are the minister. You have let people down.

We are in a crisis in Ontario. By your admission, 1,800 people a year die prematurely as a result of poor air quality. Will you do the right thing today, Minister? Will you agree to appoint an independent commission to study air quality in Ontario and make recommendations to this government on how we can clean up our problem and stop 1,800 people a year from dying prematurely in Ontario?

Hon Mr Sterling: Despite the terrible mess that was left with regard to the financial situation in this province, this government has seen fit to deal with that in a most direct manner. Basically, what's happened within my own ministry, I would love to have those additional staff to deal with a number of proactive things we might do; however, we believe we are able to continue to protect the environment with the staff we have. Basically, what happened in the budget on Tuesday was that this ministry was given much more money to deal with fixing problems. We were given some \$200 million to deal with a number of environmental problems across Ontario.

The results are beginning to show with regard to the improvement of our environment. We have noted better water quality in the Great Lakes. We have noted better air quality in this province. But that's not good enough. We are continuing to work on it like no other government has before.

1410

CHILD CARE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday I put a

very simple question to the minister. I put it to him twice and he neglected to answer my question both times, so I'm going to try again. I thought I'd make it easier. I brought with me last year's budget, the 1996 budget.

The interesting thing about budgets is that once the new one's out there, the old one seem to be forgotten, so I want to remind the minister that last year you made a commitment to spend \$200 million more on child care over five years; \$40 million dollars a year was your commitment. In Tuesday's budget you only referred to last year's portion of the \$200 million. What I was trying to ask you and perhaps didn't make clear — I want to be clear today — is I want to know where the rest of that is. Minister, does the other \$160 million represent a broken promise?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): To the honourable member, I suggest to her that the five years are not up yet and if she will wait —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: That's quite true. We promised to spend \$200 million more over five years. That was the commitment: We would spend \$200 million more on child care over five years. Wait until the end of the five-year period of time; then you might have an appropriate question to ask.

Ms Lankin: Minister, that is absolutely absurd.

Interjections.

Ms Lankin: If I could have the minister's attention. Minister, if I could have your —

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary.

Ms Lankin: Minister, your commitment —

Interjections.

Ms Lankin: Once again, Minister, could I have your attention, please. Mr Speaker, I can't put a question to the minister while he's heckling.

The Speaker: Put the question; that's all I can say.

Ms Lankin: Your commitment was for \$200 million over five years, but you spelled it out: \$40 million a year. That meant \$40 million last year, \$80 million this year, \$120 million next year, \$160 million the year after, so we're not going to wait until year five. You've got a commitment for this year for \$80 million.

What your budget said on Tuesday was that last year's \$40 million will be augmented by another \$100 million of the amount you saved from welfare through the national child income program. It's right there on page 27 of this year's budget.

Over the last two years you've made it really clear that your response to child care needs is this new tax credit and that that's where your new spending is. It begins with last year's \$40 million and then is funded by the federal child income program. What happened to last year's promise? Where is the additional \$160 million this year, the additional \$80 million? Is it a broken promise? Is it in your budget? Are you spending that money this year?

Hon Mr Eves: The money for last year, the \$40 million, was not spent. She knows that. That's the answer to that part of the question.

The reality is that we did make a commitment in the budget that was introduced on Tuesday to introduce a new \$40-million child tax credit. We also made a commitment to introduce an additional \$100 million into a

child care tax credit from the national child benefit moneys when that is changed. We are going to deliver on that commitment.

I think it's important to note that in 1985 the province of Ontario was spending about \$87 million a year in child care, and in the fiscal year 1997-98 we're going to be spending about \$600 million in child care.

NIAGARA ESCARPMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Natural Resources and the minister responsible for the Niagara Escarpment. One of the most troubling environmental issues is the decision by United Aggregates quarry near Acton to expand their quarry on the Niagara Escarpment. What's interesting is that the courts ruled they couldn't expand this quarry without a permit, and despite the court ruling, the company went ahead and expanded their quarry anyway. In other words, they broke the law.

Your government came along after they broke the law and you changed the law to overturn the court decision. You actually changed the law despite the fact that this company had broken the law.

Now we learn that the chief operating officer of United Aggregates is saying publicly that company officials had a meeting with the government on March 25, 1996, barely a week after the Court of Appeal decision. At this meeting with the then Minister of Environment, Brenda Elliott, were senior officials from MNR and MOEE who basically said, "Go ahead and break the law." Minister, did you know about —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): The leader of the third party knows full well that I can't comment on a case that's in the courts right now.

Mr Hampton: The trial of United Aggregates on charges of breaking the law with its quarry expansion has been postponed to allow time for Brenda Elliott to come forward and testify about her involvement in this scheme to break the law.

What makes this especially serious is the government's astonishing decision in March to take protection of the escarpment away from the environment ministry and put this responsibility in your hands. We need to know how you intend to carry out this responsibility.

We know that United Aggregates Ltd gave a fair amount of money to the Progressive Conservative Party before the election. We know that after the election they broke the law, and your government didn't do anything about it other than to change the law to allow them, a company that was already breaking the law, to go on doing what they were doing.

I want to ask you, Minister — you're now the person in charge — what are you going to do to protect the Niagara Escarpment? What are you going to do to protect an area of land that —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The leader of the third party knows, even by his own question, that this particular incident is still before the courts and I can't comment on it.

I can tell you in general that the reason the Niagara Escarpment was moved to the Ministry of Natural Resources is an internal administrative change. The Ministry of Natural Resources has stewardship and control over all our provincial parks system, all the protected areas, and it makes sense for the Niagara Escarpment to be placed in a ministry that's responsible for protecting those things that are nature's best. We've taken it over. We will give it good stewardship and good management. The act itself will not change. The plan itself will not change. It's an administrative change that makes sense to anyone who looks at it in an objective manner.

1420

Mr Hampton: This story gets more incredible all the time. We've got a company here that before the election gave a fair amount of money to the Conservative Party. After the election they break the law with respect to a world biosphere reserve. We're now told by the chief executive officer of the company that they actually had a meeting with the then Minister of Environment, who said, "Go ahead, break the law." MNR and MOEE officials were at that meeting. This minister, when we ask him what he's going to do to protect the environment, stands up and gives us platitudes.

Here's your own record, Minister. This is what the Environmental Commissioner has to say: "With budget and staff cuts announced in 1996, it is questionable whether MNR will be able to adequately audit and enforce the law.... The ministry is reducing its responsibility for environmental protection, without giving the public enough information" as to the cumulative environmental effects. "The ministry did not respond to some requests for information, and generally took longer than other ministries when it did respond. The ministry failed to cooperate with my process review."

It goes on. Temagami: "Contrary to" the comprehensive planning "council recommendations, the ministry will permit mining and logging in some headwater areas of Lady Evelyn Lake. The minister's decision allows mining in the Temagami area for the first time in 24 years."

It goes on. Minister, what are you going to do to protect the environment?

Hon Mr Hodgson: He's throwing in everything but the kitchen sink on this one. He's all over the map. He knows full well that I can't comment on this particular case because it's before the courts.

He can carry on with all the innuendo and conspiracy theories that he can dream up, but I can tell you one thing. On an objective measure, the World Wildlife Fund in its annual report card, which gave you a D when you were Minister of Natural Resources, has upgraded Ontario's rating to a C- under our leadership, because it recognizes there's some vision being shown and real results that protect our natural resources and the environment. Your platitudes when you were a minister — you were out cutting ribbons and not doing the regulations, the hard work that's required.

The Environmental Commissioner's report in large part dealt with the aggregate production industry. What we did there was that we built upon a pilot project, initiated under Howard Hampton as Minister of Natural Resources,

to regulate the aggregate industry. We looked at that pilot project, and to your credit it was a good one, and we made the changes in law so that was in effect province-wide.

WATER AND SEWER SERVICES

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. As you know, the environment is a very important issue in my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay, so it was with great interest that I listened to the finance minister on Tuesday speak of how your ministry is going to be investing \$200 in a program to assist municipalities with environmental works — \$200 million. I've already had some inquiries in my riding about this. I wonder if you could provide me with further information on how this program would be implemented.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thought I heard the member say \$200. I think he's a little bit out. It's \$200 million that his friend the Treasurer, who is now sitting beside him, has given to the Ministry of Environment to spend on upgrading water and sewage infrastructure across this province. This demonstrates our commitment to the Who Does What process, to assist municipalities in the transition to the full responsibility for the financing and operation of water and sewer services.

This assistance will help ensure that Ontario's communities can provide high-quality drinking water. The grant program will target municipalities facing immediate public health and environmental risk and we will be working with the provincial-municipal transition team to put this program in place.

Mr Grimmett: On May 1, 1997, the federal and provincial governments signed the new Canada-Ontario infrastructure works II program agreement. A portion of the program will fund water and sewer projects identified by municipalities. I'd like to ask the minister if this money is included in the \$200 million announced on Tuesday.

Hon Mr Sterling: I think it's important to get this point clear: The federal and provincial infrastructure program with regard to water and sewage infrastructure will be in addition to the \$200 million.

I want to say to those people who would like to look at our particular budget that this will appear in the budget figures of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, but that money will be going to water and sewage matters. In fact, he's got over \$100 million, and I know a very large portion of that will be going to water and sewage. He's assured me of that.

This is yet another initiative of this government that is beneficial to both the environment and the municipalities, and it is in addition to our other commitments to the Ministry of Environment.

VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Northerners are still steaming that the only new tax announced in Tuesday's budget was one levied on the north. They're

angry that the new Harris northern vehicle registration tax will take effect on September 1, 1997.

This morning I checked gas prices on Front Street in Toronto and the price was 55.7 cents per litre. I checked on another Front Street, this one in Hearst, where you'll be going this weekend, and gas prices were 66.9 cents per litre. Other governments have recognized the higher prices by giving northerners a break on vehicle registration fees. Not Mike Harris. Mike Harris recognizes the difference by imposing a new tax.

Will you confirm today that it will cost northerners \$115 million —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Minister?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): Coming from a member of the official opposition who, when they were in government, had this fee for northerners — we've reinstated it.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I can see the NDP's concern. They were the ones who reduced it to zero for the north and hiked it up in other places.

This issue is about fairness. The north will still get a 50% reduction on what's paid in southern Ontario, and that's to recognize the fact that gasoline costs more. To say that it's \$150 million is just not true; it's substantially less than that. In fact, our reinvestment on northern highways is more than double or is significantly more than we're going to collect on this fee that northerners will have to pay again, like they did under the Liberal government from 1985 to 1989 in this province.

Mr Bartolucci: I challenge the minister on his fact that it's not true. If we use your figures multiplied by your new tax of \$37, and multiply that by five years — the Minister of Education can figure out a simple number sentence; if you can't, get help from the finance minister; he's good at number stories — it works out to \$115 million. It's a new tax.

I have confirmation today that the vehicle registration offices in the north have been advised not to renew licences for more than one year. As the voice for the north, can you tell us today, why was such a policy made, do you agree with the policy, and were you consulted by the Minister of Transportation before this decision was made?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Let's just use the member of the opposition's math on this. He says it's going to cost \$150 million over five years.

Mr Bartolucci: I said \$115 million.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Or \$115 million. We've promised to reinvest, on top of the base budget, \$200 million over that same period of time to improve the road structure in northern Ontario. If you ask any reeve, any northerner, they tell you that one of the top priorities for northern Ontario is improved roads.

Let me go through what happened when they reduced this fee to zero for northern Ontario only. They reduced the amount of money spent on northern roads by more than that.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Hodgson: They agree. In 1992-93 — *Interjections.*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, I need order. I've got to get order first.

I believe the member for Lake Nipigon has a point of order.

Mr Pouliot: The 1993-94 capital, \$208 million, Northern Development and Mines. Your projected this year, your budget, \$193 million.

The Speaker: I know you're going to be surprised, but that's not a point of order. Now the response, Minister.

Hon Mr Hodgson: That was a very informative point of order from the member of the third party on his total capital budget, but on highways in the year 1993-94 he spent \$122 million, and on highways he spent \$115 million. We are investing \$200 million above the base budget for highways in northern Ontario, far in excess of your numbers or your numbers, and that's to make roads safer right across northern Ontario because of the neglect that went on for 12 years.

Mr Bartolucci: I'm certainly dissatisfied with that answer and I'd like a late show. We can call it an extra math class.

The Speaker: You can file the applicable papers and I'll be happy to make sure you get your late show.

1430

NATIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. This is a sentence from your budget speech on Tuesday: "If the federal government were prepared to provide first nations people in Ontario with the same level of funding it provides in the rest of Canada, annual funding to first nations people in Ontario would increase by about \$145 million." For some reason, you left this out of the speech you gave in the House. It's in the printed speech, on page 34, but you left it out of your oral speech here in the House and I wonder why you left it out.

I agree with you. The federal Liberal government has cut funding to first nations in Ontario by \$145 million, but then I read in your budget that you've cut the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat funding in half. In one year, you're taking it from \$18 million to \$9 million. Is that the reason why you left it out, Minister, because while you wanted to dump on the federal Liberals, and I agree they've underfunded first nations in Ontario, you realized that you've done the same thing? Is that the reason?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I think the minister responsible for native affairs is capable of answering the question.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The \$18 million for 1996-97 included a one-time payment of \$6 million to the mercury disability fund which was for payments to members of the Grassy Narrows and the Wabaseamong first nations who have been affected by mercury poisoning. In

addition, there was a \$1.5-million payment to the Mississauga Number 8 First Nation, the final instalment of its northern boundary land claim. When you remove these items from the line-by-line estimates you find out that the number that we come to is exactly the number that we announced last year in the business plan for the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat, so I'd suggest that the member get his facts right before he asks the question.

Mr Hampton: We have an interesting example of how this government works. The Attorney General has to explain why the Minister of Finance leaves something out of his speech, and the Attorney General explained nothing by his answer.

Let me try again. Is it because of your government's sensitivity over the Dudley George issue at Ipperwash? Is it because your government is worried about the criticism the Premier has received over his role leading up to the death of Dudley George? Even the Toronto Sun is calling for a public inquiry so that all the information can come out properly instead of being leaked out one week at a time.

Apparently the Premier doesn't want that public inquiry. Is that why you left that out of your speech? Is that why it appears in the printed speech but you left it out in your speech given here, because you don't want to draw any attention to your government's dismal record with respect to first nations? Is that why?

Hon Mr Harnick: I will refer that back to the Minister of Finance.

Hon Mr Eves: I say to the honourable member quite directly that those thoughts never crossed my mind. I left about three to five pages of disagreements between the province of Ontario and the federal government in the printed text out of my budget speech.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): He didn't.

Hon Mr Eves: I might say to the honourable member sitting behind the member for Beaches-Woodbine that the speech I have in my printed text does not have to be the same thing as this. The speech you deliver in the House is not a verbatim, word-for-word reading of the budget. I trust you can read over there.

To the honourable member and the leader of the third party, I left out about three to five pages of disagreements about things the province of Ontario has asked the federal government for because of the hooting and hollering and screaming and yelling, obviously a nerve I had touched in the official opposition.

PROVINCIAL OFFENCES REVENUES

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I have a question for the Attorney General. I notice in the media this week that there is some confusion on the part of the mayor of North York, who believes the province is going to collect the double-fines money from provincial offences while the municipalities will have to handle the headaches. What we would like to know from the minister is how he can clarify so that the province is receiving part of the double-fines money levy and clear up the confusion in the mind of the mayor of North York about this issue.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The facts in this issue are really quite simple. By virtue of Bill 108, the Streamlining of Administration of Provincial Offences Act, net revenues for these infractions will go to municipalities. The province will continue to receive the existing 15% surcharge that is levied on fines and deposited directly into the victims' justice fund. This fund, as everyone is aware, is used for programs and services to victims of crime. Provincial Offences Act infractions generate significant net revenue even after all municipal and provincial costs are covered. They will continue, pursuant to Bill 108, to be paid to municipalities which enter into agreements with the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Mr Hastings: Could the Attorney General outline to us why the municipalities are so concerned over this matter when in fact many of them, including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, came before the committee in support of this bill in the first place? Could you clarify that factor as well?

Hon Mr Harnick: As you know, Bill 108 will be coming forward for third reading very shortly. During committee hearings, many municipalities said they appreciate the province's recognition that local matters are best dealt with at the local level. They support the creation of new revenue sources which can be spent on further improving local services to their taxpayers even after the costs of this new responsibility are taken into account.

The government believes that municipal governments are responsible and capable of taking care of these important justice responsibilities. Municipalities have said they are capable of effectively carrying out these responsibilities with no reduction in services to the taxpayers who are accessing the services.

I am confident that all members of this Legislature will support Bill 108 in order to ensure that municipalities can increase their revenues. I think this is a very good thing for municipalities.

1440

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. As you're aware, St Joseph's General Hospital in Elliot Lake is undergoing a reorganization. In that reorganization the hospital is moving from the Sisters of St Joseph of Sault Ste Marie to a not-for-profit, without-share-capital corporation.

Your ministry has said that it will impose a retail sales tax on the transfer of non-medical hospital equipment in the hospital. That will cost tens of thousands of dollars for purely a technical transfer. Your ministry has already confirmed that it wishes to do that. Minister, why would you take tens of thousands of dollars from the patients of Elliot Lake?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): To the honourable member, I am unaware of the situation he just described. However, if that is in fact what the ministry is saying, I disagree and I will see that the matter is looked into and that they do not have to pay the retail sales tax.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, third party.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I know there's heckling, but you agreed on that, I think.

New question, third party.

Mrs Boyd: My question is to the Minister of Health. I'm hoping that you'll clarify the response that you gave to the member for Elgin last week on May 1. He asked you, "Minister: Is it your plan to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital?" Hansard, on page 9822 for that date, records your answer as no. You then go on to justify why the closure has been recommended by the restructuring commission. The restructuring commission, as you know, has very clearly said that it does not have the authority or the mandate under Bill 26 to close Ontario's psychiatric hospitals, that only you can make it so.

Minister, are you going to close any additional psychiatric hospitals in this province — you've already closed it in Thunder Bay — and, in particular, are you going to close both the London and St Thomas hospitals as suggested by the restructuring commission?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): This government will be guided by the arm's-length Health Services Restructuring Commission, whether that be a directive from the commission or in the form of advice from the commission. I personally don't call it a hospital closure when the forensic beds are being preserved, 65 beds being preserved. The decision the commission will make with all the input it's receiving from the community right now is whether those beds will go on the site of the St Thomas hospital now or whether they'll go up at the general hospital site, and what the form of governance will be.

The important thing is not to count a building in St Thomas which is decades old and decades overdue — and only 38% of its space was actually being used — for a conversion or renovation or modernization. I call it a modernization. What I see the commission doing makes sense so far and we'll have to see what their final directive is, or advice to the government.

Mrs Boyd: In the same question and answer you seem to indicate that the justification for your ministry's suggesting that those forensic patients — and I remind you, for forensic patients the issue is security, safety for those patients, for the community — be moved into a general hospital, which already has a long-term-care wing and is the care centre for the St Thomas area, was, first of all, that they would be able to share a kitchen and that would cost less and, second, that there wouldn't have to be additional governance. But the restructuring commission, if you've read the report, clearly put the governance of that suggested forensic facility in St Thomas under the auspices of the St Joseph Health Centre, which is taking on, under its recommendation, all the other mental health responsibilities in the London-St Thomas area.

Minister, would you explain to me why you are supportive of your ministry's suggestion —

The Speaker: Question.

Mrs Boyd: — that forensic beds go into a public general hospital, given that your explanations don't hold water, except that they might —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mr Wilson: Any savings derived from this will be fully reinvested, and more, back into the system. Let's see what the Canadian Mental Health Association, London branch, has said about the interim directive so far from the commission.

Michael Petrenko, executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, says, "This is a tremendous proposal for consumers of mental health services." He praises the plan to take functions now centralized in the London and St Thomas psychiatric hospitals and move them to municipalities stretching from Windsor to Waterloo. "This has created a new environment where people and their support structures, family, friends and support workers are in their own communities."

We're not losing any beds, as previous governments did, and I think all three political stripes were guilty in the 1970s and 1980s of closing beds and not having the community services in place. What we're doing, as the commission is saying, is moving some of these beds back to where the people actually live and where their families are, back to Waterloo, back to London and to other parts of the province, and consolidating forensic services on a site in St Thomas.

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGER

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Health as well. As you are aware, on April 1 this year a long-awaited MRI unit arrived at the Oshawa General Hospital. This MRI unit was purchased with funds from the community's Keeping the Pace campaign and matching funds from the Oshawa General Hospital auxiliary.

The delivery of this technology to Oshawa General is a great success for a community effort and for the patients in Oshawa and the region of Durham. The state-of-the-art MRI unit will benefit patients from Oshawa as well as the region of Durham. Minister, in what way is the province assisting the community and patients of Oshawa with the MRI project?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I thank the honourable member from Oshawa for the question. I look forward to joining with him and the total five Blue Jays, who are Jerry Ouellette, Jim Flaherty, John O'Toole, Janet Ecker and Julia Munro. The five MPPs, affectionately known locally as the five Blue Jays, will all be together on Monday to celebrate the opening of the MRI.

The Oshawa General magnetic resonance imaging machine brings on line a total now of 23 new MRIs, for a total of 35. That's more MRI units for the province of Ontario than all of the other provinces and territories in Canada. The people of Ontario are benefiting from reinvestment, the people of Oshawa are benefiting from our reinvestment plan. We're going to have in Oshawa an absolutely modern hospital with the newest technologies and the newest therapies. MRI is the latest addition to modernizing that hospital. Congratulations to the local members.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here that was forwarded to me by David and Jean McLay of 97 Beverley Street in Kingston. It's a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

I affix my signature to same.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I present a petition to the Legislative Assembly concerning drinking and driving.

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cut to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

This is signed by people from the town of Wawa.

1450

FIRE SAFETY

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a petition. It's headlined: "Speed, experience and teamwork save lives. Don't get burned by Bill 84." It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

That's signed by hundreds of petitioners and I add my signature. I join with them heartily in that petition, sir.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have a petition:

"Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking and the ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic of illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the streets and involve them in bureaucracy other than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr Peter North (Elgin): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission appointed by the health minister has recommended closure of the London and St Thomas psychiatric hospitals; and

"Whereas psychiatric patients are being displaced without adequate support systems; and

"Whereas article 34(1) of the Mental Health Act states, 'A patient shall be discharged from a psychiatric facility when he is no longer in need of the observation, care and treatment provided therein'; and

"Whereas article 34(2) of the Mental Health Act states, 'Subsection (1) does not authorize the discharge into the community of a patient who is subject to detention otherwise under this act';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to retain psychiatric facilities separate from schedule 1 hospitals and managed by the Ministry of Health to ensure that no person will go untreated or will be placed at risk or cause another to be placed at risk."

I affix my signature thereto.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"To the Honourable John Snobelen, Minister of Education and Training, and to the members of the Ontario Legislature:

"We, the undersigned, believe that the education of our children will suffer because the education reforms introduced by the Minister of Education and Training do not reflect:

"(1) The democratic principles that are cherished by our society;

"(2) A true perception of what our 'classrooms' involve and a true assessment of their cost; and

"(3) A recognition of the special funding needs in Metro."

I affix my signature in agreement with this.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded by Charlie Goode, chairperson of Local 707, retiree, CAW in Oakville, in support of the Ontario Nurses' Association. The petition reads as follows:

"A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cuts to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

I add my name to theirs in support of this petition.

SALE OF AMMUNITION

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have another set of petitions from legal owners and users of firearms who are concerned about ammunition regulations.

"Whereas the NDP government under former Premier Bob Rae passed legislation, Bill 181, the Ammunition

Regulation Act, placing restrictions on the sale of ammunition in Ontario; and

"Whereas the provisions contained in Bill 181 are time-consuming, onerous and create unnecessary red tape; and

"Whereas the records for which these provisions have been produced do not track criminals; and

"Whereas Bill 181 was passed in only one day, without any discussion with law-abiding gun owners such as farmers, collectors, hunters and recreational shooters, who understand and have a deep respect for the power of firearms and ammunition and the need to maintain and use their equipment in the safest of conditions; and

"Whereas Bill 181 will do nothing to combat the illegal use of ammunition;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal Bill 181, protect the rights of responsible firearms owners and work for tougher penalties against weapons offences."

I sign this petition.

NORTHWESTERN GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I've got a hospital petition. It says, "Save Northwestern Hospital."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the 1995 provincial election campaign, Mike Harris promised he would not close hospitals; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris hospital closing commission has ordered the closing of 10 hospitals in Metro Toronto alone; and

"Whereas closing community hospitals like Northwestern General Hospital and creating more costly mega-hospitals will greatly diminish the quality of health care while increasing costs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Mike Harris keep his campaign promise not to close hospitals and keep community hospitals open across Ontario as he promised."

I'll affix my name to this petition.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a petition here signed by a number of citizens from the city of Timmins, started by Gilles Racicot, and it reads as follows:

"A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cut to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that

reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

I support that petition and will sign it.

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The campaign to save TVOntario continues and we received thousands more signatures today in terms of that petition campaign. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario has been providing Ontarians of all ages with high-quality educational programs and services delivered through television and other media for 25 years;

"Whereas TVOntario provides universal access to educational broadcasting in the most effective way possible;

"Whereas TVOntario provides essential broadcast services to communities in northern Ontario;

"Whereas TVOntario has an extensive community-based advisory network spanning the province;

"Whereas TVOntario is committed to increasing net self-generated revenues by 15% every year;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To formally commit to the province's continued support of TVOntario as a publicly owned educational network."

I'm proud to sign my name to that petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me from Wayne Marston, president of the Hamilton and District Labour Council. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Labour has begun a process to fundamentally alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations with the release of the discussion paper A Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act; and

"Whereas these changes threaten to deregulate the health and safety protection for workers and reduce or eliminate the rights of workers and joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the ministry intentionally organized meetings in a manner which allowed only marginal opportunity for workers to discuss with the ministry the issues raised in the discussion paper; and

"Whereas workers deserve a full opportunity to be heard regarding the proposals that threaten the legislated provisions that provide them with protection from workplace injury, illness and death;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose the deregulation of workplace health and safety and any erosion of the protection provided workers under the Occupational Health and Safety Act; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that province-wide public hearings be held once any amendments to the act are introduced."

I add my name to these Hamiltonians' names.

1500

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is a petition to the government of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris has closed or is closing three out of five hospitals in Thunder Bay and two out of three hospitals in Sudbury and 11 hospitals in Toronto and 30 hospitals in this province so far; and

"Whereas drastic funding cuts to hospitals across Ontario are intimidating hospital boards, district health councils and local hospital restructuring commissions into considering the closing of local hospitals; and

"Whereas hospitals in the Niagara region have provided an outstanding essential service to patients and have been important facilities for medical staff to treat the residents of the Niagara Peninsula and will be required for people in Niagara for years to come; and

"Whereas the population of Niagara is on average older than that in most areas of the province;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health to restore adequate funding to hospitals in the Niagara region and guarantee that his government will not close any hospitals in the Niagara Peninsula."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full and complete agreement with this petition.

CORNWALL COURTHOUSE

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislature and to Premier Mike Harris, Minister Bob Runciman and members of the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative government have confirmed the building of a judicial structure in Cornwall; and

"Whereas Cornwall has approximately 40% of its citizens on some sort of social assistance; and

"Whereas Stats Canada has released an unemployment figure for Cornwall of 20.6%; and

"Whereas Cornwall stands to lose an additional 40 jobs and \$1.6 million in disposable income if the Cornwall Jail is closed,

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislature of Ontario to include construction of a new jail to be attached to the new judicial building."

Unemployment at 20.6% and 40% of its citizens on some form of social assistance: That's the status in Cornwall. I agree with these petitioners. I prevail upon this government to please listen.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: As my request for a late show is not convenient to everyone connected, I would ask for unanimous consent for it to be moved to next week.

The Speaker: Do you have a day?

Mr Bartolucci: Tuesday.

The Speaker: Tuesday's fine? Unanimous consent to move the late show to Tuesday? No. We have a no.

Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Cochrane South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his questions given by the Minister of Transportation concerning highway maintenance contracts. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Sudbury has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his questions given by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines concerning vehicle registration. This matter will be debated today at 6:10 pm.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 108, An Act to deal with the prosecution of certain provincial offences, to reduce duplication and to streamline administration.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Shall Bill 108 be ordered for third reading? Agreed?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Hold on for a second, Mr Speaker. I just want to think about this, because I just heard the government not agree to something we asked. I'm just wondering whether I should do this or not.

The Speaker: If I don't have unanimous consent, it will have to be ordered for committee of the whole House.

Shall Bill 108 be ordered for third reading? Agreed? No.

The bill is therefore ordered for committee of the whole House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): I beg leave to present an interim report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Does the member wish to make a brief comment?

Mr Fox: I'm very pleased to announce that after a long-drawn-out procedure of filibustering, we are now moving along quite well.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member gets away with, in presenting this, making a political statement. I want to tell you that the government rammed this through with no opposition members there to be able to deal with this matter. They immediately rammed it through. They put it

through without any opposition input on that last day, through skulduggery, I think is the word I want.

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I think it has to be pointed out, as was discussed with the opposition House leaders, that their failure to have members in attendance caused one of the committees last week to be cancelled for the whole day. It was the same —

The Speaker: Look, none of these points of order are in order. With the greatest of respect, to the member for Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings, the brief comments were somewhat off topic and not direct. I would allow one response for the member for St Catharines. I don't want to get too far into this, because none of these points of order is in fact in order.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: It isn't in order. I realize we're getting into a morass that we're getting deeper and deeper in. I probably should have called the member for Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings to order. I didn't. I will remember in the future to do that. I'm sorry.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COURTS OF JUSTICE AND MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES TRIBUNAUX JUDICIAIRES ET LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Mr Ouellette moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An act to amend the Courts of Justice Act and the Ministry of Correctional Services Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires et la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Are there any statements from the member for Oshawa?

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): The bill requires the Chief Judge of the Provincial Division to establish a program of performance evaluation for provincial judges and requires the Judicial Council to review and approve the program. At present the Chief Judge and Judicial Council have the discretion whether to take those measures. The Chief Judge is required to refer each performance evaluation of a provincial judge to a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly. The committee is required to review each performance evaluation and to recommend to the Attorney General that the judge be removed from office if it is of the opinion, based on the judge's evaluation, that the judge has failed to perform the duties of the office.

As well, if the board of parole conducts a hearing to determine whether an inmate —

The Speaker: Member for Oshawa, when I ask for just some brief comments, they're generally brief. Thank you for your input though.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You may not be able to help me with this, but I'm looking behind you. I had understood that we would have a reading of the business of the House for next week at this point in time, and I'm wondering whether that is forthcoming, whether there's a minister who has it.

The Speaker: That can come at any time during the day. It may be forthcoming. I really can't help you on that.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

1997 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Mr Speaker, I'm asking for unanimous consent to share the time with the member for Lake Nipigon and other members of the caucus.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You can't do that. You have to tell me whom you're sharing it with.

Mr Hampton: The member for Lake Nipigon, the member for Sault Ste Marie and the member for Beaches-Woodbine.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent for that? Agreed.

Mr Hampton: I'm pleased to be able to spend some time speaking about the second Bre-X document the people of Ontario will have seen in a very short time. As you know, the first Bre-X document and the first Bre-X spin was put out by a mining company that tried to convince people there was a lot of gold and that people should buy shares and buy the spin and everything would turn out fine.

The second Bre-X document is this government's budget. This government says to people across this province, "Buy the spin, listen to the television propaganda, listen to the \$8 million in television advertising that this government used taxpayers' money to pay for, but don't pay any attention to the reality of what is happening in your community." That's what this budget was all about. This budget announced several things that have been announced in the past and have never been implemented, never been acted on, but it reannounced them in an attempt to create this positive spin.

What I want to focus on today for people all across this province is the reality of what's happening in their community with increased property taxes. This government has downloaded on to municipalities the reality of a health care system that is starting to suffer from holes and cracks in it; the reality of school classrooms that are being starved and where people are using textbooks that are held together by plastic bands; the reality that despite

the fact that this government promised 725,000 new jobs in the Common Sense revolution, there are more unemployed people in Ontario today than were unemployed when this government took office; the reality that youth unemployment is a huge problem. Youth unemployment officially is approaching 20% and the real rate of youth unemployment in this province is over 30% since this government took office.

I want to contrast the Bre-X spin this government tries to put on everything with the reality of what is happening in people's communities. Let me first talk about the issue of jobs, the fact that 515,000 people in this province are out of work, the fact that 16,000 more people in the province are unemployed today than were unemployed when the government took office, the fact that there are 100,000 more unemployed young people in this province that were unemployed when this government took office.

The fact of the matter is that this government's policies, this government's budgetary policies, this government's taxation policies, are resulting in people who are already wealthy becoming far more wealthy; but middle-income families, working families, are not only worse off in terms of their income situations, they are seeing fewer and fewer job opportunities for members of their families and for people living in their communities. That's the reality.

Even people who are getting jobs — because this government has slashed good jobs in the public sector, in hospitals and in health care facilities, in the education sector, in terms of environmental protection and environmental sustainability, what people are seeing in their communities is good jobs, well-paying jobs disappearing. The only jobs this government is responsible for creating are what are commonly being called McJobs: jobs that pay very low salaries, jobs that have no pension, no benefits attached, no job security.

We are seeing this government systematically do away with the kinds of good-quality jobs that most western democracies are trying to create. The only outcomes of this government's attack on those jobs are first of all more unemployment, more people unemployed; and second, the kinds of jobs that are being created as a result of this government's policies are the McJobs. Once again the government continues to spin its story. I simply say to people across Ontario, look at the government spin and then look at the reality in your community.

Look at the nurses who provided good-quality health care in the past who are being thrown out on the street to face a future of unemployment as a result of this government's policies. Look at the health care workers who are being pushed out on the street, losing their jobs, when they should be providing the kinds of health care services that people in this province want and need and deserve.

Look at the reality that's happening in education. This government has systematically put in place budgetary policies which are resulting in teachers losing their jobs, resulting overwhelmingly in teachers' assistants and teachers' aides losing their jobs when the need in our classrooms is greater than ever.

Look at the reality among young people, and here we've had a classic attempt by the government to spin a story. They put out press releases earlier this spring

saying they were going to make summer employment for young people and employment of young people a priority, and they announced a couple of programs — \$2 million here, \$3 million, a little bit over here — but anyone who looks at the reality — go back; cast your eyes back three years ago. The budget devoted to the development of jobs, whether summer or full-time jobs for young people, is \$20 million less than it was three years ago. That's the reality. Compare it to the government's spin — \$20 million less devoted to summer employment for young people. Compare the government's spin, compare the financial reality and the jobs reality: The message to young people is that this government is prepared to allow more and more young people to fall into unemployment. That's the reality.

I want to talk about the reality gap in the government's fiscal plan, because we've seen some incredible massaging of the numbers there. What this government has done, and it's done it systematically for three years now, in the year that they are in they underestimate their tax revenue, which allows them then to overestimate the size of the deficit. At the end of the year when the tax revenues come in they go out and say to people, "We've done a wonderful job," but it's nothing more than cooking the books. The government systematically underestimates its tax revenue. It allows them to overestimate the size of the deficit. At the end of the year, the tax revenue that the federal government knows is going to come in and any economist in the province knows is going to come in, when that tax revenue comes in, the government claims a victory.

What they're also doing is they are underestimating tax revenue so much that they're even kicking some of it over into the succeeding year. That gives them the opportunity to cook the books for the next year as well, to cook not only the deficit number but to cook at the end of the year how much money was received. So at the end of the fiscal just past, the government came forward and said, "The deficit is \$700 million lower than we thought it was going to be." But if you look, if you read the fine print, they actually took \$745 million of tax revenue that was underestimated for the previous fiscal year, that is for the fiscal year 1995-96, and entered it into the calculations for 1996-97.

The only reason the government can put on a show, and I use the word "show" deliberately, that says the deficit is \$700 million less than expected is because they took \$745 million in tax revenue from the last fiscal year and pushed it into fiscal year 1996-97. What it means is that in fact the deficit was actually lower than they stated in 1995-96, and the deficit was lower than they stated in 1994-95.

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I invite people across the province to get a copy of the numbers and follow them year to year. You will see the extent to which there is a huge gap between the fiscal pronouncements of this government in terms of deficit and tax revenue and what is really happening there.

I give them credit. I give them credit for great spin. I give them credit for lining up those public relations people out there who tell them, "This is how you run the line, and this is how you run the line again and again, to

get the media to buy into it." But I invite anybody to look at the numbers. This government overestimated the deficit in 1994-95, they transferred revenue from 1994-95 into 1995-96 and they transferred revenue from 1995-96 into 1996-97. They're doing it again this year. We estimate, in looking at this budget, that they have underestimated their tax revenue for fiscal year 1996-97 by at least \$100 million right off the top. Not only that, but they have underestimated — they're in complete contrast with the federal government — how much some of that revenue pool is going to grow.

Once again they are adjusting the books to try to make themselves look better in 1997-98. I give you credit for the spin. But I invite people to look at the reality and how these numbers are being cooked.

I want to look at something else that people all across the province ought to be very concerned about: the health care gap. We've seen examples of it here in the Legislature for the last two days. The government is trying to spin a story that it is spending more money on patient care than ever before. They're trying to spin a story that, "Gee, \$18.3 billion is being spent on patient care." Even the Ontario Medical Association, which I admit is more friendly towards the government than they've ever been towards us as New Democrats, says the government is full of baloney. In fact, the head of the Ontario Medical Association in their press release today was very clear; he said, "Ontario Budget Misleading on Health Care Spending."

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Pretty strong words.

Mr Hampton: Very strong words.

If I can quote, it says very clearly, "The Ontario government's claim that yesterday's budget puts more money into health care is misleading, and it does not address current problems caused by cuts in previous years, said Ontario Medical Association President Dr Gerry Rowland.

"There has been no tangible increase in health care spending for 1997-98 despite the increasing health care needs of the population. I see nothing in this budget to reassure patients that access to care will be any better this year."

Then he points out what the government is really doing. The fact of the matter is, it will cost this government money to close hospitals. The fact of the matter is, if you're going to throw 10,000 nurses and health care workers out in the street, they are due severance pay; under law, they are due severance pay. The Minister of Health is trying to tell people across this province that the money that will legally have to go to pay those nurses and health care workers severance pay and the money that will have to be spent to close those hospitals is patient care money.

The Ontario Medical Association has just said very clearly to the Minister of Health, "Stop misleading the people of Ontario." He said very clearly, "For the 1997-98 fiscal year the Ministry of Health operating expenditures will be \$17.845 billion, just \$1 million more than last year. A one-time expenditure for health care restructuring totals \$450 million for 1997-98." He says that is not for patient care.

Then he goes on to say that the \$1 million more that is in the Ministry of Health budget operating expenditures this year over last year is the \$1 million that the Ministry of Health spent on those cynical TV ads telling people across the province, "Oh, health care is in wonderful shape," despite the fact that people can't get into emergency wards, despite the fact that people are dying in corridors in hospitals, despite the fact that children who go to Sick Kids Hospital for cancer treatment are told, "Go home, there aren't enough nurses on duty today to supervise those cancer treatments."

What cynical use of Ministry of Health operating budget dollars, to spin a story that people know from their own experience in their own community, in their own hospital, in their own health care centre is false. I'm glad the Ontario Medical Association has called the government.

What's incredible here is this: I bet this is the first time ever in the history of health care anywhere that a government has tried to come forward and count money that is being used to close hospitals and push nurses and health care workers out in the street and paint that as money devoted to patient care. How cynical. How absurd.

Again, it's the reality gap. This government spins a story in the media. I invite people to look at the real figures, the reality of what's happening in their own community. They will find that, just like the Bre-X prospectus, the story that was told to investors in this province and around the world is totally at odds with the reality. That is obviously the case here.

But it goes on: the reality gap for children. We saw an example of that. Last year this government had the gall to come into this Legislature in their 1996-97 budget speech and the Minister of Finance got up and said, "This government cares about children." He announced \$40 million for new child care and he announced that it would be \$200 million spread over five years.

The \$40 million was not spent last year. It was not spent. The government said one thing and did another to children. They announced that children mattered, and then they would not put any of that funding forward to help children — \$40 million.

They came in and tried to renege the announcement this year. The Minister of Finance stands up and says, "Well, \$40 million is going to go into child care this year, into a child care tax credit." But look at the fine print. If it's a child tax credit, it means that people will have to incur the expense this year; they won't get reimbursed until 1998. In other words, they're trying to announce here money that's not going to get spent until 1998. They didn't even talk about the further \$40 million that is due this year.

So they're out \$40 million from last year and \$80 million from this year. They're out, overall now, the \$40 million that was to be spent last year and the \$80 million that was to be spent this year on children; \$120 million is the gap already with respect to children. The government says one thing, that they care about children, "Here's the money to show it," and then it disappears. A reality gap with respect to children of \$120 million already.

But it gets bigger, because we asked questions in this Legislature today about, "When's the money going to come in year three and year four and year five?" What we heard today was that fine, grating noise of a skate blade hitting the ice. That's what we heard today in this House as the Minister of Finance skated to the left, skated to the right, anything to avoid the reality gap this government has with respect to children, anything to skate away from that reality gap with respect to children.

Then there's the national child benefit. The national child benefit is supposed to be aimed at children in this country who are in the worst of situations. It's supposed to help raise children who are living in poverty into a somewhat better position in life, to give them a better chance. How is this government going to use it? This government is going to use it in a very cynical way again, and it simply adds to the reality gap. This government, instead of ensuring that money goes into the hands of children who are worse off, is going to use that for a tax credit for child care as well. The reality is, however, that that tax credit does nothing to improve the lot of those children who are worse off.

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Take the example of someone who is on social assistance. In order to get that tax credit, they would have to advance the money out of their own pocket to get the child care. But this government has already put those parents, many of them single parents, in such a disastrous position that they don't have any free cash. In fact, many past the 23rd or 24th day of each month don't even have money to put food on the table. They have to go to a food bank to get food to feed their children, so where are they going to get the money to pay for child care? They can't, and because they can't, they will never have access to this program, they will never be able to upfront the money to get the tax credit in 1998. Incredibly cynical.

This is just absurd. What an absurd use of the national child benefit. I hope the federal government, when they see this scheme, says, "No, we can't go along with this." My fear, however, is that the federal Liberal government has bought into just the kinds of schemes that this government is trying to perpetrate here. That's my fear. If the federal Liberal government has an ounce of decency left, they will simply look at this scheme and say: "No, it's not on. This would be a misuse of the national child benefit." My fear, however, is that they have bought into this kind of cynical, nefarious scheme.

At the end of the day, if you look at almost everything the Minister of Finance said yesterday — the \$40-million scenario for child care and the use of the national child benefit or the misuse of the national child benefit in Ontario — it means that for children receiving social assistance in Ontario the net gain of all of this is zero. I say again, there's the reality gap. The government gives a great speech, makes some wonderful announcements, but for children who are the worst off there is nothing there for them.

I want to talk a bit about education because the reality gap grows there. The government, as we know, has dramatically cut education funding in this province, and we're seeing it in classroom after classroom. We are seeing it with respect to children going to school holding

their textbooks together with elastic bands. We are seeing the increasing class sizes that have gone from 31 to 35 to 39 and next year probably over 40. We are seeing it in terms of classrooms where there aren't enough textbooks for children. We are seeing it in classrooms where children with special needs are absolutely left behind.

Because budgets have been cut so severely, children who have a learning disability, children who need additional help in a particular area, are basically being shoved to the back of the class. There is no help there for them. There is no extra time, there are no extra resources. You don't matter: That's the message that is coming out for these children. Teachers' aides are becoming a thing of the past in classrooms across this province, teachers' assistants are becoming a thing of the past in classrooms across this province as a result of this government's funding cuts to education.

We hear the Minister of Finance, we hear the Minister of Education every day spinning his stories. The reality is that children in classroom after classroom are suffering. So what did we hear in the budget announcement? The government tries to reannounce their capital spending for new schools. This is the same capital spending that they held up two years ago. It's the same capital spending that they announced last fall and they tried to spin it in this budget speech as yet another new announcement. It is simply a reannouncement of something that was already announced last fall and the reannouncement of something that this government has been responsible for holding up almost two years now. Again, the reality gap.

The government continues to announce and re-announce something that will do nothing for children in the classroom. The reality that children in the classroom are facing is fewer and fewer resources, less and less attention devoted to them, larger and larger classrooms, textbooks that are more and more out of date. Children who are really in need of additional help are basically being pushed through the cracks, through the holes to the back of the room.

But it gets worse. The government knows that their budget does not allow for the hiring of additional teachers, does not allow for any new teachers to come into the system, which means that the classrooms are going to get larger and larger. In an attempt to spin a story to deal with that, the government says that they want to enter negotiations with Ontario teachers and they want to work out an early retirement program. What they don't say is they want the teachers, through the teachers' pension fund, to finance this early retirement. I have to say this. It's the teachers' pension fund. It's not the Mike Harris pension fund, although Mike Harris has quite a healthy pension fund now. It's not the Ernie Eves, Minister of Finance, pension fund, although he has quite a healthy pension fund now. It's neither of those. This is the teachers' pension fund.

What the government is really proposing to do is to reach into the teachers' pension fund and replace the money that has been cut from the Ministry of Education budget with money out of the teachers' pension fund. That's what this is about: taking money that teachers have put in that fund. They take risk in how it's invested, but now the government wants to reach in there and take

it to replace the money that they have cut from the Ministry of Education budget. Once again, the reality gap.

In announcing that they want to take this money out of the teachers' fund, what the government is really doing is acknowledging how badly they have cut the Ministry of Education, how badly they have cut classroom funding across this province, when they have to pilfer from the teachers' pension fund in order to find a way to bring new teachers into the system. That's how desperate the situation is getting out there in education. We saw in this budget speech a recognition, although the government will deny it, of how large that reality gap is growing as a result of their cuts to education.

But it goes on. We just heard today the Attorney General trying to explain away, trying to spin away, a budget cut: half of the budget of the ministry of native affairs. The ministry of native affairs budget has gone from \$18 million down to \$9 million. I'm well aware of how this government treats first nations people. That's becoming more and more evident every day. But the reality gap once again: This government says to people, "Believe in this government, follow this government, invest in Bre-X and good things will happen."

What's happening to native people? They are seeing people who are among the poorest in this province, who have the highest unemployment rates in this province, who have the most difficult time in terms of finding room for employment in this province, being told by this government, "We're cutting your budget in half."

The Attorney General tried to spin this. He tried to say this is just a onetime thing. He tried to say that the native affairs secretariat had an \$18-million budget as a result of some onetime payments, but simply look at the budget. The ministry's budget has gone from about \$14 million to \$16 million and then last year to \$18 million. That has been the budget of that ministry over the last three years. It's clear there's no onetime payment here. It's clear this government simply decided to go in and to hack away half of the budget for the people who are in the least advantageous position in this province. That is what is happening. Then the Attorney General tries to get up and spin us a story that that isn't really the case.

We are going to see more and more of these situations over the next weeks as all of this unfolds. The fact of the matter is this government has no plan for health care. The fact of the matter is this government is simply stumbling through the dark on one of the most important services for this province. The reality is, if you want to have a productive economy, you have to have a healthy and productive workforce. If you want to have a healthy and productive workforce, you have to have a good health care system to support and sustain that quality of health in the population.

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This government is taking one of the things that people in Ontario hold dearest, that we believe in the most, and, like someone stumbling and bumbling through the dark, is literally levelling that health care system, creating holes and cracks in that health care system with no plan. We are going to illustrate that. Just as the Ontario Medical Association pointed it out in their press release today, we are going to illustrate over and over again how the cracks

in our health care system are going to widen. They are going to widen, they are going to deepen and they are going to increase. This government is putting one of the fundamental building blocks of our society at risk in terms of its inept approach to health care.

This government is putting one of the other fundamental building blocks of our society at risk: education. We know that in order to be a productive society, you have to have a well-educated and well-trained society. That will become even more true as we enter into the 21st century, when things like natural resources and geographic location will matter less. What will matter more will be the skills, the training, the education level of your workforce. But this government is prepared to sacrifice that and is sacrificing it. Every day, as we see this government's attacks on education unfold, that reality gap will become more and more evident to people.

I want to conclude now by simply saying to this government and saying to people all across this province, we will illustrate every day, day in and day out, how much this government's budget, how much this government's agenda is so much like the failed Bre-X fiasco.

The government continues to try to spin stories, but when you look beneath the stories that they try to spin in the media at the reality that is happening in our communities, the reality that's happening in our hospitals, the reality that is happening in our health care centres, the reality that's happening to patients, the reality that's happening to children in schools, the reality about no jobs, the reality about more people being unemployed, the reality about more and more young people being unemployed, the reality that municipal property taxes will have to increase because this government has offloaded some very important pieces of health care — ambulances, public health — on to municipalities, the reality that seniors' apartments, seniors' housing, supportive housing, social housing, all of these costs, have been pushed on to municipalities, the reality that this government is abandoning — I say abandoning — 3,400 kilometres of provincial roads, forcing them down on to municipalities — all of these things will mean increases in municipal property taxes.

I say again, we are going to come here day in and day out and we are going to expose this government's reality gap, how much this government is like Bre-X Minerals, how much it spins a story but how painful the underlying health care, educational and social reality is across this province.

Mr Pouliot: I too welcome the opportunity to spend a moment or two with my colleagues to address budget '97. I've tried to decipher, to differentiate between what is the budget document itself — because this long-awaited address, budget '97, to 11-million-plus Ontarians is the most important document that is tabled in this House.

In a broadly summarized form I will go line by line, in a 20- or 25-minute allocation so we share with our colleagues, and quickly present to you that the devil is in the detail. But you weren't about to notice this when you were here this week, May 6, two days ago, to listen to the budget speech, because we have two documents. This is the spin; this is the good light they wish to put on the

budget. This document here is made for spin doctors. It's not made for accountants; it's not made for scrutiny.

You see, once you get to the real figures, accountants get in the way. They tend to slow things down. Members of the Common Sense Revolution have better things to do than to scrutinize the reality of what is the budget, so they come up with a budget speech, which is supposed to address the needs of Ontarians and tell them about their financial future through programs in the year to come, the fiscal year April 1 last to March 31, 1998.

You see, we're in the midst of a federal campaign; the writs have been issued. They just could not resist the seduction, the lure, of taking a shot at the feds.

Interjection.

Mr Pouliot: Mr Speaker, I keep on being interrupted by the member across. By his interruptions he has already told us more than he knows on these matters.

On pages 32 and 33 of the Ontario budget speech it says: "Federal Action Needed on Taxes and Job Creation"; "High EI Payroll Taxes are Killing Jobs"; "Fair Treatment for People in Ontario"; "Federal Cooperation in Improving the Tax System." So they're aiming their guns at the federal government. They know there's an election coming. They also know that their political dog is trailing the field, so they'll do anything to promote the good fortune of the Reform Party by taking a side shot at the federal Liberals under the auspices and the immunity of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. While there is a convenience attached to that methodology, to that style, some critics would see this as barely crass politics of the lowest order that belongs with a cheap circus that's about to leave town, certainly not in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and certainly not when we're talking about the budget.

This is what Mike Harris said three years ago. He was sitting there, where he was more comfortable and it's more his style. He was sitting with the opposition. We were the government and he came up with these gems: "You see, there is only one taxpayer, and that taxpayer is fed up with the old style of politics. They're fed up with the finger-pointing and blaming someone else."

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Who said that?

Mr Pouliot: Mike Harris on May 11, 1994.

Mr Eves points three years later, does the same thing. He keeps on whining. Mike Harris said to Premier Rae then, "So it actually is a disgrace when the Premier of the province of Ontario spends his time whining, pointing fingers, blaming others." What you had last Tuesday is a lament, three pages of a sad litany blaming others, the kind of lament, the kind of whining that is better suited for a tired Albany or Toronto club, but certainly not with pointing the finger when all you have to do is to look at your own books.

Once you get to the budget, the official document, the government wishes to be all things, everything, to all people: that there are no people left out in the cold; there are no people bordering on destitution; there are no people having to cancel medical appointments two or three times; there are no people not getting access to a full and first-class education. Yet when I said the devil is in the details, listen to this. I wish to share this with you. The pain is real. This document tells us about the real

Ontario of today, not the Ontario which is seen through Mike Harris's eyes in a circle of the well-to-do, the more fortunate.

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The Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation: 1995-96 — this is actually what they spent; this is real — \$363 million. Their budget has been gutted, has been slashed to \$280 million.

The Ministry of Environment and Energy: The budget goes from \$239 million, and this fiscal year they'll be spending \$150 million. So when you go home, boil your water. Make sure, because there's nobody around to check it.

When we were in office and times were more difficult — everyone will readily agree and acquiesce to that — when it came to different ministries, we spent immensely more. This is what you're elected to do, to provide basic care for Ontarians. That's why they pay tax dollars. You have to have the will. But if you're caught with the Common Sense Revolution, process becomes more important than people. Choices have to be made: for some impossible choices; for others, the way they see things and the way people will live things is a completely different indication. It paints a different picture indeed.

The Ministry of Municipal affairs and Housing: Talking about the operating budget — I'll get to the capital in a second — \$2.02 billion; the year before, \$2.421 billion. You're looking at \$401 million less. It doesn't auger well for people who require a helping hand. This is out the door. What the government is saying here is, "The problem with the homeless is that they don't have a home." That's what they're saying. What about a chance to get back on your feet, to have that basic necessity which is shelter? You have \$401 million less. That's a lot of money, over 20% less money.

The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines: If you're a northerner out there — many of our caucus, many members of the House come from northern Ontario — if you're not too busy and happen to see us on the parliamentary channel, please listen to this. In 1993-94, difficult years, I remember so vividly, we were representing our constituents then too and we were spending, under difficult conditions, \$83 million. This was the operating budget of northern development and mines, the most accessible ministry up north. You were there, not ahead of people, not behind, but with people.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): How much?

Mr Pouliot: It was \$83 million. These are good times, the money keeps rolling in and they're down to \$41 million.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Good.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): And the Tory members say, "Good."

Mr Pouliot: Oh, that's good. Oh, yes. Big guy. Do it. Push the floor, big guy. We'll deal with you.

Ministry of Transportation: The actual spending in 1995-96 was \$1.054 billion. That budget has been decreased for this year to \$750 million. You can shout all you want, you can paint a glossy picture, you can make light of what is being said, but these are your own figures: a 30% cut. It's not very complex: the section between the soft shoulder, because their budget is in the

ditch here. They're cutting 30% out of the operating budget, which includes transfer payments. If you want some highways, if you wish to have a secondary highway, you build it yourself. You raise the money at the local level. Maybe a bake sale, maybe a little bingo and a car wash on Saturday. Unbelievable.

Then we get to native affairs. You know the plight of our first Canadians. In the great riding of Lake Nipigon, for instance, there are 20 reserves; 10 we refer to as northern reserves and 10 as southern reserves, but all in the confines, all within the geographic location of our great riding.

Traditionally there's been a relationship, mostly with the federal government, but over the years there's been a need for the provincial government to take part in helping those who are less fortunate; a bit of a debt that we owe. It's not the prettiest of history. People need more help. Well, the government here has cut the budget from \$18 million to \$9 million in one year. "Can't get an education, sir? Cannot integrate economically? Stand on your own two feet. Tough luck." Left in the cold, twisting in the wind, penniless, without a friend and, more important, with the reality that your conditions will not improve; in fact, quite the contrary.

Let's talk about the human dimension, let's talk about a helping hand, let's talk about a commitment; not a great deal of dollars, but the necessity to provide, the necessity to give hope. You won't find it if you are a native Canadian, sadly. It need not cost a lot. It comes back to you many-fold. It's a pittance compared to the overall, but it's not there.

You see, the government has to satisfy a personal income tax cut. Every time you pay \$100 of federal taxes and you look at it on your pay stub, add to it \$58 before the tax implementation. That's the Ontario portion of tax which is deducted on behalf of the province. Rather than hit you twice, they say, "This is \$158 coming out in taxes"; \$100 stays with the federal government and \$58 is the provincial responsibility.

If they're inclined this way, they make a choice between services, the deficit — we would all wish to be debt-free; it's a normal and natural reaction — and the style. Their style says, "We'll go with a tax cut." Then there were choices under the tax cut, if you're inclined this way. Once you've made this choice of a tax cut mostly benefiting the wealthy and fewer services for everyone, and add to it, salt it with user-pay, you get the picture; but not a tax cut at the consumer level, not a sales tax cut so that if you want to buy a fridge, you'd save 2%, 3%, 4%. In fact, 4% would pretty well be the equivalent. Everyone is a consumer. But of course not, they chose to go the high hand. The rich person will only buy one fridge, but they will save on their personal income tax.

In terms of revenue — and I want to share this with you — it's starting to tell. As it works its way into the payroll, into the system, this is what's happening: actual 1995-96 personal income tax, \$15 billion; 1997-98, \$14.49 billion. When all is said and done, you'll be looking at \$5.4 billion that you will have to find elsewhere.

My leader has mentioned, "Oh, they'll find it all right." They'll find it in hospitalville on University here, in rural hospitals and clinics, in pretty well each and every classroom in the province of Ontario. That's where they'll make up the slack. There are no secrets here. They have to find \$5.4 billion. They will further erode the middle class. People are hard-pressed to see where's the diff. I'm going to pay more next year for my property tax. If I am renting, I'm going to pay more. I'll pay more for almost everything I use in terms of public, social services. The federal government will take a little more for EI, for employment insurance, and quite a bit more for CPP.

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I invite people to take their pay stubs to the kitchen table. I know that's what we do each month. When I get my stipend — because the people of Lake Nipigon pay me what I think is a very good salary — I take it home at the end of the month and I take the pay stub and put it on the kitchen table. Okay, I might as well tell you the whole truth. I also have a little ledger, the money coming in and the money spent, and there's a few dollars that I have to put aside for the rainy days, so I take some money and I buy a few things under an RRSP.

Interjections.

Mr Pouliot: You can laugh all you want when your pockets are filled and when you point at ordinary people and say, "You've had a chance to be like me and to do this and that," but not everyone is in the same boat.

Personal income tax revenue will be going down. The retail sales tax is going up. People are spending. There is somewhat of an economic recovery, but you don't see it in jobs. Many people, in order to bring home a sustainable income, are forced to take a second, and some a third, job. Some of the job growth has been experienced in the service sectors. They're not well-paid jobs; they're more like jobettes. They're small jobs. You take two hours there, three hours there, and you try to round up the money. They don't always have a good pay attached to them, but people are trying. People are resourceful, and they're saying: "Maybe it's my turn. Maybe I will latch on to this and latch on to that."

Consumer debt: We all have friends who say, "I'm throwing in the towel; I can't do it; I'm going to declare personal bankruptcy because I'm overextended," or "I've lost my job; I was a civil servant and I was told 'Out the door.' I have to declare personal bankruptcy."

Savings? Talk to me about savings when you're trying to make ends meet. It's not easy. That's at an all-time low.

When you look for the recovery, you really have to look closely, because the average people are not benefiting. What you have is a constant erosion of the middle class and the working poor who are paying for all this. Some 515,000 people are out of work, a missed opportunity to address through a program, a get-back-to-work-quick scheme. There's no such thing here.

The way they choose to operate, they go to the chartered banks and they say, "We will give you a tax rebate, a kickback, on the loans that you make to small businesses," because they pay a tax and they pay a bit of a surtax. "Forget about the surtax. If you do your job,

which is lending money to small business, we will give you a tax break."

That's like you, Mr Speaker, getting extra money for showing up at work in the morning. It's their job. What we need is more competition. Bring the rascals down to Main Street and let them benefit people. Those people are merchants. They don't produce things, they turn things. They're brokers. They get it coming or going without competition. But people are frightened: "What's going to happen to me? Are they going to call my loan in?"

The international investors couldn't care less if the small business component, the small business person, goes cap in hand and says: "I want to expand. I must meet my payroll." "Out the door" is the attitude. Then they go to Ottawa for five years before and five years after the Bank Act gets reviewed, and they become the best lobbyists. It's a cartel, it's a monopoly of the worst order, and now this government has chosen to give the banks tax incentives when they lend money to small business — truly the world upside down. We should be so lucky.

You will recall that the Premier promised during the last campaign that he would not raise taxes, and if there was a user fee then it should be called a tax, because it was a tax in disguise.

In northern Ontario, and this is current this morning, "vehicle population statistics for the northern region," that's all of northern Ontario: passenger vehicles, 354,663; motorcycles, 10,925; commercial vehicles, 178,424. Surprise, surprise. We don't pay anything. We have a bit of a tradeoff. It's no big deal; it's mostly symbolic. That little sticker on your plate, if you live in northern Ontario you pay zero, because everyone knows that you pay at the pump. Every time you put a litre of gasoline into your vehicle, you pay anything between 10 and 15 cents more per litre. That's a lot of money. In Manitouwadge we can't take the subway. We don't have a public transportation system. We need a car for the distances that we travel. We travel a lot of mileage, so a car is a necessity, it goes without saying, and we warm up the car longer. Northern winters are colder and they're longer as well.

For the contribution that we make, they slapped us in the face. They said, "Pay \$37." Oh, it's reduced if you live in southern Ontario, but we will pay now \$37, an extra tank of gas.

Anyone out there — and I know many, many people will recognize themselves here: 354,663 passenger vehicles; motorcycles, 10,925; commercial vehicles, 178,424. All of us in northern Ontario are disappointed because we have been deceived. We were told one thing, and you have to believe someone at some time, and the reality is quite a different thing. Not a pretty picture at all.

One thing in the budget is the government says we must live within our means. Do you know that this government in its second year in office — and they claim they are going forward — this year they will spend \$2 billion more to pay for the coupons to service the debt. It was \$7 billion last year. It's right here. This year they'll pay \$9 billion.

There's no secret here. That tax cut, since they're in a deficit position, is borrowed money. They don't have the

money, so they borrow the money. When you borrow money, you've got to pay the vendor with coupons, interest rates. It's going to cost them \$2 billion more. They don't want to talk about this. They say they're on the right track. But they're increasing the debt, they're increasing the burden. They're doing the exact opposite of what they would like us to believe they defend. They're not contrary to a debt; they're partakers, they're very much involved in it. They will say: "Well, look, we're getting some interest rate breaks, and this will really impact on the debt. We have almost historically low interest rates."

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But close scrutiny of the books, the way the debt is structured, tells a different tale. It's not callable. Every year only a small portion of the debt comes due, matures. But they are indebted long-term. I have some of the interest rates here: 11.31% to the year 2015; I have some Ontario savings bonds, that's not so bad; oh, I have money payable in Europe in Canadian dollars, payable in US dollars, in pounds sterling, in Swiss francs, German marks, Japanese yen, Australian dollars. They have very little control over their debt.

Add to it the burden of Ontario Hydro. The government will say, "Ontario Hydro has nothing to do with us," when it serves their purpose. When Ontario Hydro goes and borrows, the government says, "We'll back you; we have everything to do with you."

So talk to me about good fiscal management, point the finger about living within your means. Because of the injustice built into the tax scheme, the missed opportunity that we had to be fair, you have the erosion of the middle class, which is real, real, real; the pain is pain, pain, pain. They claim they don't wish to hurt anyone, but because of process — and they put process and ideology ahead of people. They must get there and get there in a hurry. Simply put, they're like Pac-Man: They're going up the food chain, because you must satisfy the agenda.

The middle class sees itself more and more as being eroded, fewer people. Their voice isn't as strong. The working poor are having a difficult time. They don't see chances for growth. The elderly are picking up the pieces. They can't go back 20 years and start another career, and they have to deal with user pay.

The Canada that we cherish, the Ontario that benefited us so much, is —

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Rapidly disappearing.

Mr Pouliot: — very rapidly indeed, disappearing.

What we're asking by way of plea is for the government to put the brakes on. Don't move on so many fronts so quickly. A budget gives you, once a year, that opportunity. It tells the tale. It builds the roads for one year. It spells out the future with a timetable. Don't overestimate the capacity of people to make changes. If you do so, you shall do so at your own peril. It is a catalyst in political philosophy — superimpose a timetable — that if you move too fast, you will make more mistakes. People must be given the chance to cost the changes, to adapt, to digest, to assimilate the situation.

I must share the time with my colleagues, but I wish to leave on a positive note. I was happily surprised —

and we must never judge people, because sometimes we are wrong — with the commitment, and it appears to be fairly straightforward, that this government has chosen to direct at the research and development sector. For that, I applaud them. I trust that the money will find its due course. It was surprising because you look to the future, and for an entity that is certainly not given to research and development, it's a pleasant surprise.

That's the one positive thing I wish to say about the budget. But when I put it on a scale and I weigh it against the missed opportunities, I have to say that I come away saddened. We have an economic recovery, but we don't have the equivalent and the corresponding job discovery.

Mr Martin: I want to thank my colleagues the leader of our party and the critic for finance for sharing with me this afternoon some time to put some thoughts on the record about this budget and put that in the context of where we are at this time in our history with this government and where we are going. I think our leader, Howard Hampton, spoke very eloquently and clearly about the reality gap that exists between what this budget puts out as the vision for the province, the spin it puts on it, the public relations exercise that's happening, and what in fact at the end of the day is going to result on the streets of our communities, places like Timmins, Sault Ste Marie, Manitouwadge, Fort Frances and other wonderful communities across this province.

Our finance critic, the member who comes to us from the wonderful community of Manitouwadge, Mr Pouliot, talks very eloquently of the finances and took us through a very clear and understandable analysis of what's there and what's not there, but most importantly, what's not there.

I suggest to you that the reality gap that we in our caucus talk about with regard to this budget is very real. It's something that people have to take some time to look at, to study and to then take some action about. For example, in this budget there is the tax break, the wonderful tax break, that shining star in the east that is going to take care of everything, is going to make the economy better, is going to make us all feel better, is going to in the end return us to a place after all the services we've come to count on and depend on in this province are destroyed and build them back up again.

But those of us who have looked at the figures, our critic for finance, those of us who understand numbers in any way, know that two thirds of the tax benefit that's going to derive from this budget will in fact go to the top 10% of earners in this province. That's scandalous.

If you were to take two sheets of paper and on one sheet put the benefits that will accrue to all of us in this province because of the tax break and on the other sheet put all of the things that are going to disappear, all of the damage that is being done to our communities and to people because of the policies of this government, which have been so clearly spoken of in the last couple of days by the budget that was delivered, you will see that this would take pages and pages and pages. The ledger, as the member previously said, is not in balance at all, and it, as it does him, saddens me very much.

But I want to talk today about a couple of things. I'm the economic development critic for our caucus. I want to share and put on the record just a couple of thoughts that come to my mind as I look at this budget and I think about it in the context of my community and this wonderful province I have chosen to live in and in the context of this country, because the policies of this provincial government are very much in sync with the policies of our federal government today and so many of the provincial legislatures.

The question one has to ask in light of a budget such as the one that was delivered here on Tuesday of this week is: Where is the government taking us? Where is it that we're going? What is the plan? What is the vision for all of us as a community of people that this government wants us to buy into, that this government is building a framework for, that this government is wanting to take us down that road to?

I suggest to you, as maybe others might not, that this government does have a plan. This government has a vision. There should be no doubt that they know where they're going and they know where they want to take us. It is a buy-in to the global economy. I'm not being critical of the global economy here because I think we all have to understand that the global economy is very much in the nature of the Bre-X fiasco that we saw in this province and in this country over the last number of weeks: a lot of glitz, a lot of show, a lot of bright lights, but at the end of the day, no gold. This budget has a lot of talk about a tax break and money for health care and all kinds of bells and whistles, but at the end of the day, less services and, alas, less jobs.

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The global economy — and that's where we're heading and I don't think anybody should make any bones about it — is about money. More than anything else, it's about money and it's about profits. It's about money and profits at all costs. The Bre-X analogy that we are putting out as a caucus to describe this budget is perfect.

This government, in my estimation, is playing fast and loose with the lives and the livelihood of the people it was elected to serve. This government and the vision it has for the economy is not about people and it's not about jobs and it's not about communities. It's about high-grading, and we who have lived in the north, in small communities in the north particularly, know what that's all about. There isn't a community in northern Ontario over the last 50 years that hasn't learned, particularly in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, how to ride that roller-coaster of ups and downs.

What high-grading means is to come in and take the best and leave the rest and the hell with the people and the hell with the community. That's what the global economy is about. That's what this government is about in this province. Sadly, where the high-grading used to be ore and trees and natural resources, the high-grading now in this province has become the resource that people are.

My good friend Ted Schmidt, who writes for Catholic New Times, spoke to us in Sault Ste Marie a few weeks ago, spoke to an ecumenical church gathering of people during the season of Lent, calling us to understand what it meant to be a people of justice. He said that the global

economy is about — and he has studied it and he has studied others who have studied it — taking advantage of the top 20% of the resources that we have that are the best and the hell with the rest.

They want the brightest of our young people, so they're changing the school system to make that happen. They want the healthiest among us, so they're changing the health care system to make that happen. They don't want an economy that is based on making sure that the resources and the contributions that all people can make are recognized and valued. They want what they can get easily and put in their machines, pump out the profit, pump out the money for that small group of people who at the end of the day will get it and they will give back what they only absolutely have to, and that is really sad.

What the global economy is about, and we've bought into it as a country and as a province in the free trade agreement, in the context of Canada, the United States and Mexico, is that Canada has the resources, Mexico has the cheap labour and they take that product and they sell it back in the States. Everybody at the end of the day in that kind of scenario loses, and most particularly, in our instance we lose big time, because the resources that are naturally ours by reason of our citizenship are being taken from us by those who can make profit from it and keep it to themselves with very little or minimal return to the rest of us, to the communities we live in and to the people we care about.

That's the nature of the global economy, and as I said earlier, I didn't come here today to be particularly critical of that because that's the way it works. That's the way that system works and that's why we have governments, to make sure that the rewards of that kind of a system are shared equally among those who have a right to some part of that.

What this government is about is turning that over, is getting out of the business of protecting the environment, getting out of the business of protecting people, getting out of the business of protecting communities. I only have to for a second, Speaker, to explain that to you, talk about the community of Elliot Lake, which in the early 1990s found itself in that spiral, that vortex of loss of a resource that had any kind of real value any more because to mine the uranium of Elliot Lake became too expensive and Ontario Hydro thought they could get their resource some place else.

We were the government at that particular point in time and we could have said, "Let the market decide. To hell with Elliot Lake," to hell with the people who took their hard-earned money, who had worked very hard over a number of years, and any of you who have worked in the mines know how difficult that work can be. They took that money, they invested in that community. They bought homes, they built community centres, they gave their money so that the hospitals could be developed further, so that we could have schools.

If we were at that particular point in time living by the attitude of this government, we would just say: "To hell with Elliot Lake. Let the market decide. Its time is up. People just have to move on. The investors will take their money and they'll invest it some place else, but the people have got to pack up their goods in their cars and

their vans and they've got to move to wherever there is another job and turn their backs on their life's investment," which oftentimes was represented by a house or a car, but most particularly by that community.

But we didn't do that and that's the difference between this government, which buys into an economy that's about profit and money at all costs, and a government that's about making sure that what profit and money is generated in an economy is shared equitably and that investments that are made by all people, not just those who are well-placed or who have the most money, get protected and that we all at the end of the day come out with our dignity intact, with some hope for the future and some vision of what our life could be about.

The problem with this government, of course, is that it's not taking those responsibilities to heart and not maximizing the benefit of the economy that we're moving into to the benefit of all. We in this province are not in an economy that's failing. From the perspective of profits, when you read the financial reports of most of our large corporations in this province, when you read the annual statements of the banks that operate in Ontario and in Canada, you see unparalleled profits being generated, you see historically high record profits at the bottom of the page.

You ask yourself, in that kind of an economy, in that kind of a world where that kind of money and wealth is being generated, why it is that we're not seeing the result in jobs. Why is it that governments, both federal and provincial, are cutting the services that we have all come to rely on? Why is it in a province that is generating in the private sector the kind of profits that we see that a government would make a decision, in its wisdom, to take 22% out of the income of the poorest people who live in our communities?

I suggest to you, Speaker, in this world of high-grading, that those people are dispensable. We'll pay them, we'll give them to live on, we'll afford them the very minimum that it will take so that we don't get ourselves in trouble with the international community that might point a finger at us, the United Nations or Amnesty International or whatever.

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The speaker before me, the illustrious finance critic for our party, talked a bit about the reduction in the budget that we just saw to our native first peoples. Those are communities that have poverty in them that has been spoken of by the United Nations and groups out there who cast a jaundiced eye at governments and jurisdictions that do not take care of their poorest and their most vulnerable, and they have been very critical. But that's the road we're going down. There is no sense in this budget, no indication that we are changing course in any significant direction from that day in July 1995 when all of us woke up to the reality that this government was going to beat up on the most vulnerable and the most poor in our communities by taking 22% out of their take-home pay.

Interjection: Their take-home pay?

Mr Martin: That's what it is, their take-home pay. That's their income; that's what they use to buy food for their children and put it on the table, that's what they use

to house themselves, that's what they use to get education for their children, to feed themselves. That's what it's for.

In an economy where we're not generating the kind of jobs that were predicted by this government when it first got elected and in an economy where we've come to accept a 9%, 10%, 11% unemployment rate as normal and natural, to take the victims of that kind of process or reality and tell them that even though they can't get a job because there is no job out there for them, they are going to have to live on less and move more and more into poverty, to take away from them access to health care, to take away from them some of the medication that under previous governments they knew they could count on, to take away from them the possibility that their children might be able to rise above this dilemma they find themselves in and get an education, to claim that that's all right and is somehow morally ethical speaks volumes about where this government is taking us, speaks volumes about the Bre-X approach to life and the economy this government is propping up and wants us all to buy into and be part of.

The government would lead you to believe, by some of the public relations and the spin they're wrapping this budget in, and the federal government is doing pretty much the same thing — they're telling us, "We have no choice; our hands are tied; the global reality dictates."

Mr Gerretsen: They have a choice about the tax cut.

Mr Martin: They have a choice about the tax cut, and some have taken it and some haven't.

But there is an alternative, and I suggest to you that it's an alternative that's consistent with the best traditions of this province and this country over the last 20 or 30 years. There's the choice of building an economy that's based on solid resources as opposed to hopes and misinformation and public relations.

It's the choice, the alternative, to build an economy that is reinforced by the best we can offer to our children and to our adults who find themselves displaced in the world we live in now, with the change in the economy etc, to provide them with the best in education, the best in opportunities to learn and to evolve and to roll with the punches and to be part of the action.

It's an economy that's built on a health care system that's there for everybody when they get sick, that's there for everybody to keep them well so they don't get sick in the first place, that's there for our children, that's there for our working people no matter where you work. If you work at Algoma Steel or you work at McDonald's, the health care system that we've built up in this province and in this country is there for everybody.

If you look at the budget we're being presented with here — and it's consistent with what we've seen so far in the short two years these folks have had the reins of power in this province — it's disappearing. It's not the same as it was. I talk to old people in my own community who are afraid to go to the hospital any more because they don't know if they're going to be looked after. Most particularly, I talk to elderly people who don't have family around any more — they're off in other places — to make sure they get the kind of health care they need.

The alternative that we as a caucus in this place would present to the people of this province, given an opportu-

ity, in contrast to the global economy and the global economic vision this government would have us buy into, is built on an investment in infrastructure, something that previous governments felt committed to, something we as a government certainly felt committed to.

You heard earlier this afternoon some reference to the kind of money that used to be, for example, in the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. Some \$83 million, was it? This year it's going to be \$41 million. What about that investment in infrastructure? What about that investment in roads and in communities and in buildings that makes our province attractive to new investment?

In 1994, when we were government, this province saw the most investment in one year that had been seen in its history to that point. Why were people attracted to Ontario? Why were new companies attracted to investing in Ontario? Why was Ontario such a wonderful place for investors to come and sink some roots? I'll tell you why: It's because we had in place at that time — and alas, we're losing it — a first-class education system, a first-class health care system and an infrastructure that was second to none, that was the best we could provide and presented opportunity for people who would make things and produce things and set up a plant to get their products to market.

What is it that people want? Look at what this government is delivering and talk to people in communities like Sault Ste Marie and Manitouwadge and Toronto. You hear of their anxiety and their loss of hope and sense the lack of vision out there because of what they see coming at them from this government, because they don't see their part in the vision this government has for this province, don't see the role they can play, don't see what they do and what they have to offer as people as being valued.

What is it they do want? What is it they tell you when you get a chance to speak to them heart to heart? I know what they tell me. The people I talk to say they want a government that is willing to show leadership, a government that is willing to take responsibility for the lives of the people it represents, a government that's willing to take responsibility for the communities over which it governs, to make sure they're viable and strong and provide for the people who live in them, systems that will support them in the good times and the bad. They want a government that is visionary and hopeful, that has a five- and a 10-year plan down the road, that is responsive and expects a contribution from people and is inclusive of all the people who live within its jurisdiction.

They want a government that's interested in working together with communities and with people, that is willing to partner with people, that is willing to partner with the private sector, with the workers in plants like Algoma Steel and St Marys Paper and Spruce Falls; so that when they find themselves in rough water they know and we know together that there is nothing that will come at us that we can't solve, that we can't take care of, that we can't somehow make right so that there is not only a present, but a future for all of us and for our children; so that the investments we make today together in the resource we all are, in the resource that the communities

in which we live are — we know it will be there for our children and our future generations.

They want governments to be architects of prosperity, and central to that is a sense of balance. That balance has to include the economy, it has to include the social life of the community and, more than anything, in my mind it has to include employment. There have to be jobs for people. If you don't have jobs for people, you have no hope; they have no hope. There's no hope for the jurisdiction in which we live. People want to work. People have resources to offer. People have things they want to do. People want to be part of the common life of the communities in which they live, and this government has not presented them or provided them with that opportunity.

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NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would seek the consent of the House to move the late shows requested by the members for Sudbury and Cochrane South from tonight to Tuesday, May 13.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there unanimous consent? It's agreed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to discharge the order of committee of the whole House on Bill 108, An Act to deal with the prosecution of certain provincial offences, to reduce duplication and to streamline administration, and order the bill for third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it agreed? *Interjections.*

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm not trying to be objectionable here. This is something I don't know anything about and I don't know if anybody in our caucus is aware of it. That's the only reason I'm objecting at this point. If it's something that has been agreed to — I would just ask the government that this not be dealt with at this point. But at this point I would not give agreement to that.

Hon Mr Leach: Mr Speaker, I have the weekly business statement.

Pursuant to standing order 55, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of May 12, 1997.

On Monday, May 12, the House will begin second reading of Bill 96, the Tenant Protection Act.

On Tuesday, May 13, we hope to complete second reading of Bill 96, the Tenant Protection Act.

On Wednesday, May 14, the House hopes to complete third reading of Bill 84, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act.

On Thursday, May 15, we hope to complete third reading of Bill 106, the Fair Municipal Finance Act.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the government to call forward next week Bill 125, which is the bill dealing with truck safety. As you know, the Minister of Transportation —

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. When are you going to do this?

Mr Bisson: I'm doing it right now. I know the Minister of Transportation takes his bill very seriously and has said he wants this legislation dealt with. We're prepared to deal with it at second reading and I'm asking for unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? No, there is not unanimous consent.

1997 ONTARIO BUDGET (continued)

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak on our good-news budget that some editorial writers and columnists I see call a "no-surprise, no-news budget." I think that's probably understandable, given the fact that it follows right from our commitment that was laid out in the Common Sense Revolution where we said what we were going to do. We were going to cut taxes, create jobs and eliminate the deficit in order to protect and maintain those services that Ontarians want and depend on: health care, education and safe communities. That is exactly what this budget plans for and lays out. How does it help us achieve these goals? First, let's look at deficit reduction.

We promised Ontarians that we would eliminate the \$11.2-billion deficit that we inherited when we took office in June 1995 and that we would do it within our mandate. This budget, I can say, moves us a step closer in this direction, and it's a very important goal. At the end of fiscal year 1996-97 our deficit was down to \$7.6 billion, by the end of fiscal year 1997-98 the deficit will be down to \$6.6 billion, and by the end of the following fiscal year this will have shrunk to \$4.8 billion. That's 58% less than the \$11.2-billion deficit we inherited. That is an amazing achievement.

Interjection.

Ms Bassett: Tax cuts, another one of our promises, and I point this out to my colleague on the opposite side that he might listen: The 20 tax reductions announced in Tuesday's budget bring to a total of 30 the tax cuts this government has introduced in the less than two years it has been in office.

What's more important, the economy is responding with jobs and growth. What a change from the 10 years prior to our taking office, when between 1985 and 1995 previous governments hiked our taxes 65 times, including 11 increases in personal income taxes alone. These tax hikes did not balance the budget, nor did they create jobs. In fact, our debt tripled during this time.

The government is keeping its promises well to reduce Ontario's personal income tax rate by 30%, and this budget again moves us in that direction. On July 1 this year, Ontario's income tax rate will be reduced to 47% of the basic federal tax, and on January 12 next year it will come down again to 45% of the basic federal tax.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): That's one of the lowest in Canada.

Ms Bassett: That's right. It is one of the lowest in Canada.

As for jobs, another one of our important initiatives, this government is committed to creating jobs and the finance minister introduced a variety of measures to take us in that direction. First, the government is establishing a network of enterprise centres for small businesses to help them grow and in effect create more jobs. Entrepreneurs will be able to get help in marketing, accounting, business planning and overall business strategy. This, we hear again and again, is a prime need that small businesses have demanded and want and that they feel will help them grow.

Second, this budget brings in measures to make it easier for small business people to get the capital they need to expand. Therefore they will be able to hire more people, and of course this will create more jobs.

The government is also making it easier for these small businesses to get capital by the following group of measures that I'll just ream off:

Small business tax credits for banks introduced last year are now going to be permanent.

The government has increased the amount of surtax that banks can earn back every time they invest in one of Ontario's small businesses, and the government has also created community small business investment funds that will make these funds eligible for labour-sponsored investment funds and for small business investment tax credits for banks.

These are demands that during the pre-budget consultations the standing committee on finance and economic affairs heard again and again, and we are answering their pleas for more help in this regard.

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Research and development: I am most excited by the fact that the minister has made research and development a key focus of this government. In fact, he has created five new tax breaks for business to help create new R&D jobs. Again, I kept hearing from every single business and technological association that came before the standing committee on finance and economic affairs in the pre-budget consultations about the need to have high-tech jobs and to have training and research in these areas.

The cornerstone of this initiative is the 10-year, \$3-billion R&D challenge fund. Ontario is going to contribute \$500 million to this fund over the next 10 years. That's why those who were in the House on Tuesday for the presentation of the budget could see University of Toronto president Rob Prichard sitting up in the gallery, smiling, because he realizes that this move, this important step is going to take us in the right direction and will enable him to keep the research here at the University of Toronto and other universities across the province.

The government has also announced the creation of the Ontario business-research institute tax credit, which will provide a 20% tax credit for qualifying businesses sponsoring R&D projects performed by university and research hospitals; and it will extend the sales tax exemption for R&D equipment to non-profit medical research facilities, allow companies to deduct the cost of purchasing new technology and eliminate Ontario's tax on royalty payments for foreign technologies such as computer software, all moves that are important in developing the initiatives we have taken. We cannot underestimate the

importance of these initiatives and what it will do for the future of high-tech jobs in this province.

Youth employment, another important initiative: I'm pleased to say that this government is going to invest \$6 million towards helping 40,000 students get summer jobs. The Minister of Finance also announced that the government will be providing a 10% tax credit to both small and large private sector employers to create 45,000 internship jobs over the next three years. This will help provide students with the experience they need to go out and get jobs. How many of us know young people who want to get a job who come back and say, "Nobody will hire me because I don't have any experience"? This initiative is going to help them get that experience.

We are also expanding the cooperative education tax credit so that employers who hire students in leading-edge technology educational programs will receive a 10% tax credit voucher — another significant initiative.

Now for the film and television tax credit, something dear to my heart. I'm very excited about the measures introduced to the burgeoning and important film and television industry that are going to make it more competitive. As everybody who's involved in film knows, a lot of the film industry picks up and leaves if the province is not inviting, if the province doesn't make it economically sound to be here. Film and television across the province, especially in Toronto, is the source of hundreds and hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue for business and for tourism.

The finance minister, who is ever aware of the importance of this industry to the province, announced on Tuesday that the very successful film and television tax credit will be increased to 20%, which is up from 15% last year. He also introduced a new 15% computer animation and special effects tax credit for production in Ontario, and earmarked \$12 million to create a new animation communications design and technology centre at Sheridan College. Little wonder that Norman Jewison, our noted film producer from Canada, was sitting up there cheering these moves, because he knows how important it is.

Mr Pouliot: They're not supposed to.

Ms Bassett: He was stopped from cheering, but he wanted to cheer — he muffled his cheers — because he realized how important this measure is to Ontario's film industry.

Despite all its complexities, this budget is in my view breathtakingly simple. It's proof that we have turned the corner to achieve a balanced budget. We've done it by doing what we said we'd do: cutting taxes, cutting spending, cutting government and cutting red tape. What's more, the economy is surging forward.

The real story, regardless of all the naysayers, some of whom are sitting right across from me now, is that our plan is working. As a result of this plan and the results it is having, we are able to invest more money in health care, education and our safer communities. As a result of our plan, we are putting more money back into the pockets of hardworking Ontarians. As a result of our plan, Ontario's economy is responding with jobs and growth. Businesses and consumers are more confident. They can see that the economy is turning around. They

can see better days ahead. Our plan is working. We have turned the corner towards prosperity for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Pouliot: The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance — I must say this — comes well prepared. She certainly attempts, and it's a very noble attempt, to balance while seeking an equilibrium. It's most unfortunate that the task handed you by the government of the day is so tedious, that you have to put a spin and a positive message has to come through. When you look at what is being done — the member mentioned jobs for young people, those who are most impacted. The reality is that, yes, they're spending money, but it's \$22 million less than the previous year. Also, 14,000 fewer of those people in need of a job will have a job. That's the reality of the day.

We talked about the film industry and some of the incentives. It's quite welcome. But it's a little too much, with the highest of respect, to suggest that banks get a tax kickback on the surtax they pay for lending money to small business. What we're saying is, "You get a reward for doing the job you should have been doing in the first place." I was under the impression that banks were lenders, but now, for doing their job, they get a benefit. It goes beyond the obscene. I don't wish the words to be too bold, but banks getting yet another break goes beyond the obscene. They've reached the foreseen. It's time to come back to our senses.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I take great pleasure in congratulating the member for St Andrew-St Patrick on her comments on the budget, a very exciting budget. What has been quite delightful to watch is the response of the opposition parties, because it's very difficult to criticize a positive budget which speaks so well for the future of our province.

I'm personally ecstatic about a decision that has been made for Sheridan College's animation and innovation course. We are going to encourage the reversal of the brain drain from Ontario to California in animation. We have, in Sheridan College in Oakville, 8,000 applications for 500 student placements in that course alone. Those students leave Ontario and go and work in California, and the really exciting thing that's now going to happen is that where we already have Disney in Toronto, we are going to bring, hopefully, Fox and several other of the major film production studios to Toronto. We will have the animators graduating from Sheridan College able to do their work here at home in our province. The spinoff of the jobs that will create will be the most exciting thing that has happened in this province in a decade.

I heard the members opposite talking about how important it was to have jobs. As a result of the decisions made by this government in this budget, you will find an increase in the job opportunities in this province. We already had a very exciting month of March this year with all the new jobs created. I salute the Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves.

1700

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm wondering if the member had time to quote into the record the Premier's remarks about whining about other levels of

government. The Premier, on May 11, 1994, said: "All we have heard from the government is whining that we need more money from a bankrupt federal government. I believe that it is time for us to stop whining. It is time for us to fix that which is broken right here in our own province. It is time for us to take back our own destiny again, get our own affairs in order again."

The Premier said: "It actually is a disgrace when the Premier of the province of Ontario spends his time whining, pointing fingers, blaming others. That is not the legacy, that is not the history, of this province I grew up in, and that will not be the legacy and the history of this province when we bring common sense back to it." That's Mike Harris saying that. I agree with Mike.

Let me see what else Mike said about this. "You see, there is only one taxpayer, and that taxpayer is fed up with the old style of politics. They're fed up with the finger-pointing and blaming someone else. They're demanding major reform of a broken system."

Mike Harris goes on to say: "We suggest that the Premier and this Legislature should turn their energies to fix that which is broken here in the province of Ontario. I'll tell you this: If the Premier spent as much time working towards making Ontario great again as he spends at pointing fingers and running down other levels of government, then Ontario would be great again." You know something? Mike Harris was right. I agree with him. I remember applauding him. I remember applauding Gary Carr when he said, "The public doesn't want partisanship or gamesmanship, they want results." I thought Mike Harris was right. By gosh, I thought he should have applied that to the exercise of this budget. I'm sure the member agrees with me and with Mike Harris.

Ms Martel: In response to the comments made by the member for St Andrew-St Patrick, let's talk about employment first. I notice the member neglected to mention that there are 16,000 more people unemployed today in 1997 as this budget was delivered than were unemployed in 1995 when this government took office.

There are 100,000 young people unemployed in the province today. That is a record high for the province of Ontario. And what did this government offer? To add \$6 million back to the budget it announced a couple of weeks ago, a budget that I remind you was \$22 million less than our budget in 1995 for youth unemployment, \$22 million less. You are going to create 14,000 fewer jobs for young people in the province this summer than we did in 1995, at a time when 100,000 young people are looking for jobs. That is a pathetic response to the level of youth unemployment in this province, and the government should be embarrassed by what was announced by the finance minister here two days ago.

Let's talk about health care, because I noticed the member didn't have very much to say. This government has tried to say that there is going to be \$1 billion more in the health care budget. Never mind what I have to say about that. What does the president of the Ontario Medical Association have to say about that?

"The Ontario government's claim that yesterday's budget puts more money into health care is misleading," said president Dr Gerry Rowland. "There has been no tangible increase in health care spending for 1997-98.

Despite the increasing health care needs of the population, I see nothing in this budget to reassure patients that access to health care will be any better this year." That's what he had to say, never mind about what the opposition says. These are the people who normally support you — nothing good around health care in this budget.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Andrew-St Patrick has two minutes to respond.

Ms Bassett: I must say to the member for Sudbury East that I'm proud of the initiatives announced by the finance minister of Tuesday. I think he brought down a workmanlike budget filled with initiatives that are going to take us forward into the next century. I say to the members for Lake Nipigon and St Catharines that they are naysayers who can't accept the good news and good sense of this budget. The member for Mississauga South recognizes the key messages in this budget and that they are going to take us forward.

This budget continues the implementation of the government's plan. It keeps us on track for a balanced budget for 2000-01 and makes us more accountable to the taxpayers — no more tax hikes for this government. This plan makes record investments in research and development and is going to create jobs for the future. This plan invests in education and invests money where it is needed, in the classroom. The plan assures that it is our commitment to provide quality health care for all Ontarians now and for the future. It also allows taxpayers to keep more of their money in their pockets by cutting personal income taxes. In total, we have cut our taxes 30 times in less than two years. Our plan is creating jobs for the future, and I'm proud of it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate on the budget. I'll just go through a few observations on the budget and then, as usual, you let the public make their decision on it.

I would say the budget clearly reflects Mike Harris's view of Ontario. It clearly is his agenda. It's an agenda that kept Preston Manning from running candidates in the last provincial election. I understand all that. It kept Reform out of Ontario. It's an agenda that Mike Harris hasn't deviated from one inch. It's something I fundamentally disagree with, and I'll run through the reasons.

First, in terms of its effect on property taxes — I would say to all of Ontario, these are the government's own numbers, not our numbers — the government announced in this budget that it was cancelling a municipal support grant of \$666 million. We now know as a result of that and the announcement on May 1 that the government of Ontario has decided to load about \$660 million off the province on to municipalities. Without question, that's what's happened, and that will cost property taxpayers about a 5% increase in property tax. When people say to me, "I like this income tax cut," I say, "All right, here's one of its costs: Your property taxes are going to go up at least 5% because they have decided to load \$660 million of extra costs on municipalities." The municipal support grant, according to the government, will be gone, discontinued, on January 1, 1998. That's the first impact of the budget.

I understand that the hand-picked municipal people who were at those meetings agreed to it. It was: "Either you get \$1 billion of extra costs added on or we'll only add \$666 million. What do you want?" "Well, just add \$666 million." If I were a councillor on any council in Ontario watching this, I would phone AMO, AMO being the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and say, "Is it right that we now have \$660 million more money added on to property tax?"

1710

I might add that some of the most sensitive services are now on property taxes: social housing — and remember this: Well over half of all the social housing in Ontario is for seniors. It now has been put on to the property tax. I think that's fundamentally wrong. You won't find one organization, the boards of trade — the handpicked Dave Crombie Who Does What panel said, "Don't do this." But this budget forces social housing on to property tax. It's wrong. It is dead wrong. I guarantee you, as the recession hits, you are going to have seniors who rely on this for their housing in a competition with other hard-pressed property taxpayers.

I would add that they've added almost \$900 million of social assistance cost on to property tax. They've added \$200 million of ambulance costs and \$225 million of public health on to property taxes. Without doubt, that will take property taxes up by 5% in the province.

Part of this as well, by the way, and the public will begin to recognize this, is now, for the first time in the history of Ontario, the province of Ontario is going to set the mill rate on a third of the property taxes. One third of your property taxes, now the province of Ontario sets that mill rate. It is unprecedented. It is an attack by the province of Ontario on property taxes.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): At the request of the municipalities.

Mr Phillips: I hear the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and I'm glad he's here, because it was him who got us into this mess.

Mr Bradley: On behalf of Mike Harris.

Mr Phillips: On behalf of Mike Harris. Even here, this is one of the funniest — not funny, but just an example of the incompetence. We now find in this little release, "Whoops, we made a \$400-million mistake; \$400 million of the revenue that we thought was residential property tax we subsequently found was commercial property tax."

I point that out because it's a sign of incompetence. There it is: \$400 million. None the less, now the province of Ontario is going to set over half of the property taxes for businesses in this province; and for the residents of Ontario, you're going to set a quarter of the residential mill rate.

By the way — and this is interesting too, because it was just a few months ago the province said, "Furthermore, the municipalities can reduce their property taxes by 10%." I said in the House the other day: "The province now is setting one third of the mill rate. Are you going to reduce your mill rate by 10%?" The answer was no.

So the first point I'm making on the budget is: Property taxpayers beware, the province is loading it on. The municipalities were faced with a tough choice: "Do you

want \$1 billion added on or \$660 million?" They took the \$660 million.

But without question, the big thing in the budget — one big thing in the budget — is the downloading of cost on to property tax. I would add also that this is going to occur at the very same time as the new property tax assessment goes through. I've said many times that without question the bank towers in Metropolitan Toronto are going to see their taxes reduced by at least \$3 million.

Mr Bradley: Oh, they'll be happy.

Mr Phillips: The banks will be happy, my colleague says. The bank towers' property taxes will go down by \$3 million without any question of a doubt. Where will that go? Where will it be made up? It will be made up by small business.

I was astonished to read in the paper that the Minister of Finance said, "Oh, yes, but our bill permits the municipalities to set a different rate on small business." It doesn't. He doesn't understand the bill. We went to the committee and we said, "Show us where in the bill that's allowed." The bureaucrats had to acknowledge that it isn't permitted. The property tax bill that we will be voting on in this House in the next few weeks does not permit two classes of commercial.

The reason I raise this is, when the Conservative members speak proudly of the budget, I say to Ontario, firstly, recognize you're going to pay for this with your property taxes going up. Those are the numbers, and that's what's going to happen.

The second thing I'd like to talk about in the budget is the job performance. I carry around the Common Sense Revolution. I know it's the bible of the government. You got elected with some certain commitments. This one was so specific; it said, "This plan will create more than 725,000 new jobs over the next five years."

We now have your own projections for the first two and a half years, halfway through the mandate of the government; we're halfway to that 725,000-job target. Where are we on that? In the budget, they show the 1997 number, and they have an employment — and they call it the "up-to number." That's the maximum they predict in the budget. If I take that up-to number for 1997, halfway through the government's mandate, you're 165,000 jobs behind target. It's particularly acute, I might add, among our young people.

I say to the people who are being asked to make huge sacrifices — and that is our hospitals; hospitals across this province are seeing their budgets cut by 20%. They're being asked to make those kinds of sacrifices. Our school boards have had their budgets cut by over \$500 million. They're being asked to make those sacrifices. Our municipalities are being asked to shoulder another \$660 million of cost.

We're going through all of that pain. The gain was supposed to be job creation. That was what we were promised. So far it has been a dismal record. One can only hope the numbers will improve. I have been, I think along with most people, very shocked at the performance over the last few months. In fact, Ontario has actually lost 11,000 jobs in the last seven months. The rest of Canada has gained 88,000 jobs. It has been a dismal

performance. I always add that March was a relatively good month, I acknowledge that, but the last seven months have been dismal. There is now no credible economist you can find who would say Mike Harris is going to hit his 725,000 job number.

When my leader talked about punishing the young, it is our young people who are suffering the most on the employment front, where the reported rate of unemployment in the first quarter of 1997 was 18.5%. In reality, as we all know, because a lot of them have dropped out, it's dramatically higher than that.

I know the Conservative members are very proud of this budget. I don't share that view. I don't share that view, because it's loading cost on to property taxes and we are punishing the unemployed.

I wanted to talk just briefly about education, because the member for — Ms Bassett. I'm sorry, I forget the riding.

Mr Bradley: St Andrew-St Patrick.

Mr Phillips: — St Andrew-St Patrick mentioned — I don't like to personalize these things. But the president of the University of Toronto was in the gallery and was smiling and applauding.

Let me tell you what's happening with tuition fees, because the university presidents are advocating deregulating university fees, just let the market handle it. We've now seen the first example of it. My old school, Western, has taken the tuition fee up in their MBA program from \$3,000 a year to \$18,000 a year. The Minister of Education gave them a huge pat on the back and he's applauding them for taking them from \$3,000 to \$18,000. He's proud that the university has converted its publicly subsidized program to a full cost recovery. He says, "Best of all, those who reap the benefits will be the ones paying the cost."

1720

Let me say, is this really what we want? Do we want our young people and their futures and their aspirations and their hopes to be dependent on how wealthy and privileged your family is? I honest to goodness think, personally, we're heading down the wrong road in a serious way. What it means is that if you've got money — Rosedale will love this: Because you've got the money, you'll get your kids there and they'll buy a job and they'll be successful. But surely that's not what we're all about. Isn't what we're all about that when you're born in this province, you have a view that the future is not going to be limited by where or how you're born but rather by how hard you work and how much you care?

I find it objectionable, and I found it objectionable that the university presidents seemed to think this is great. The Minister of Education is giving them a great big pat on the back and they're in the gallery smiling about the budget. That's not my Ontario. In my opinion, it will be "buy a job." Rosedale will love this, the people on Bay Street will love it because their kids will have a better chance to get into these schools. But you think of somebody whose family may not have the same privileges and who worries about the future. Surely to goodness this isn't what we're all about. Yes, you can applaud the budget and you can say it's the kind of Ontario you want.

I shouldn't become quite as upset about that but I think that if we don't begin to have a debate around this, we are going to get ourselves into some really serious problems.

Just as an aside, on October 19, 1995, the Minister of Community and Social Services — I carry this around — sent out this: "Will you please put this poster on public buildings?" It was the one to go after welfare fraud. All of us want to stamp out welfare fraud, all of us recognize that abuse in welfare is something we must deal with, but sending something like that out and saying to post this in public buildings so we can hunt down welfare fraud — "proud of this budget"? You can be proud of it. I have another view of it.

The tax cut: Again I say to my friends who are being asked to make the sacrifices, who are being asked to take 20% from their hospital budgets, all those on social assistance are living with 20% less. Remember, over half the people on social assistance are children and they are being asked to live with 20% less. If you try and live on that amount of money with some dignity and some self-respect and buy proper clothing — but they're being asked to sacrifice. Why? In my opinion, to fund the tax cut. The tax cut does benefit the best-off. As a percentage, yes, they get less of a percentage break, but \$500 million of the tax break goes to people making more than \$250,000 in Ontario. You can be proud of the tax cut. It may sell well, and you opened your speech with "the tax cut and we're proud to have the tax cut," but if the deficit is so important that we must see tuition fees going up to \$18,000, we must see 20% cut from our hospitals, we must see \$500 million cut from our elementary and secondary schools — why? Because we've got to slay this deficit problem.

Tell me again how we can afford this tax cut. To my business friends I say, look at the numbers in the budget on the deficit. The province is going to add \$30 billion of debt. These are the numbers; these are Mike Harris's numbers — from the time he became Premier till the next election, \$30 billion of debt. By the way, I would add that I think it took the province, in its whole history, up to 1985 to get to \$30 billion of debt. We're going to add \$30 billion of debt but we can afford the tax cut.

Be very proud of the budget, if you want. It's creating an Ontario that I don't agree with.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): More tax increases would be better.

Mr Phillips: The member across may think it appropriate to take tuition fees up where young people in this province will have little hope of going to post-secondary school because they can't see the opportunity to raise that kind of money.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): The Mike Harris Ontario.

Mr Phillips: My colleague says, "The Mike Harris Ontario," and it is shaping up, I gather, exactly as Mike Harris wants. But it is a very different Ontario than Bill Davis wanted, than Leslie Frost wanted, and I think a very different Ontario than certainly I want and than I think Ontario wants.

Hon Mr Leach: And John Robarts.

Mr Phillips: And John Robarts too. So, proudly you can say you support your budget. I say I have a different view of it.

On the health budget, perhaps the most serious problem is our hospitals. The government is determined to cut 20% out of our hospital budgets. We are seeing our population grow by 150,000 a year. Every year in Ontario our population grows by 150,000. We are seeing the number of people over the age of 65 growing by roughly 30,000 a year. We are seeing a substantial increase in need in the future. But what is happening is that the government has decided to cut 20% from the hospital budgets. I can virtually guarantee that the result of that will be far deeper cuts to our hospitals than we should ever accept. Why are we doing that? Because Mike Harris has decided that Ontario should have a 30% income tax cut. Again, you can all be very proud of the budget. I say I proudly object to the budget. I think you are clearly heading in the wrong direction.

I wanted to talk a little bit about some other cuts that we can now begin to see in the budget because this tax cut comes with an enormous cost. By the way, I said earlier that Mike Harris plans to add \$30 billion of debt to the province over their first four years. The tax cut will cost over the first four years \$15 billion in lost revenue. Those aren't my numbers, once again. I take the numbers straight out of the budget. The financial officials provide an estimate on the cost of the tax cut. It's \$4.815 billion in 1996-97, and to use the jargon, when you gross it up or fully implement it, it becomes an annual cost of \$5.5 billion.

1730

I know why Mike Harris wants the tax cut. It's because he fundamentally believes that government, the beast, has to be starved, and the tax cut is the best way to permanently do that. I say this: The costs that we will enact in Ontario in terms of the quality of service for children's education and for our seniors is enormous. The government has decided to let the revenue horse, as I often say, out of the barn before the expenditure horse is in the barn, and we are going to eliminate any of our flexibility. I know that the government members are proud of this budget and say, "Listen, we love it."

I will talk a little bit more about some of the cuts in the budget, because in addition to the impact on municipalities — as I say, for our fire services and our police services, the essential services in our municipalities, you can imagine the strain that is going to be put on police budgets, because in most municipalities that is the largest single item in the budget.

For those services when the province has decided to load \$660 million of extra cost on it, you can imagine the strain on our police budgets and our fire budgets. But I gather the government is very proud of this budget, very proud of the fact that they are able to proceed with the tax cut without realizing what it's going to mean to our local fire services and our local police services.

It's informative to look at the budget in terms of some other areas. I see the Solicitor General's budget cut. That's correctional services and our policing services down by \$60 million. Somebody over there said, "They can be more effective." I will await that. I see that the

budget has been cut quite dramatically in our northern development and mines, down substantially over the last two years, to \$369 million. I see also some quite substantial cuts to the Attorney General's budget. That budget was \$1 billion two years ago; it's now \$650 million.

I say to people who believed when Mike Harris said, "This plan guarantees full funding for law enforcement and education spending in the classroom," first, for our local police organizations, the government has decided to cut its support dramatically to municipalities and add \$660 million of cost. That is going to directly hit our policing budgets. Here in the province the two ministries that support this area, the Attorney General's ministry and the Solicitor General's ministry, are down substantially. The government members, I gather, are very proud of this budget. I have a very different view of it.

Finally, I'll talk a little bit about the state of the reporting of the finances of the province. The Minister of Finance yesterday said in answer to a question, "We've implemented all of the Ontario Financial Review Commission's recommendations." That simply isn't true; it's not even close to true. You haven't implemented those recommendations.

Furthermore, I will say now, the books of the province of Ontario are starting to not reflect the finances of the province of Ontario. That becomes a very serious situation, because the people of Ontario have a right — to use the language of Premier Harris: "They're the shareholders. They deserve to have an accurate reflection of the finances."

The reporting now is starting to not reflect accurately the finances of the province. They have, this year and last year, set up several of what are called restructuring funds. They are partially legitimate, but in some cases we are now — essentially they are slush funds being set aside, reported in one fiscal year and the actual legitimate expenditures taking place in a different year. That becomes a significant problem because the rating of this province used to be AAA. We've had three downgrades over the last five years. We are now —

Mrs Marland: How many over the last 10?

Mr Phillips: The member says, "How many over the last 10?" Actually, if you did any analysis you would find that Ontario, in 1990, had an absolute AAA rating. It was downgraded three times. It has not been upgraded yet. Why? Well, the worry about the fact that the province is making a tax cut. The way the province is beginning to report its finances will not be helpful.

I might add that I found it amusing — I used the word "weird." Mike Harris talked about setting up his own income tax collection agency, either his own bureaucracy or get American Express to do it or something. That was weird. Are we really serious about setting up another bureaucracy and having two organizations out collecting income tax? It's wacko. If you want to make a threat, make a sensible, reasonable threat. I don't know where that came from, but you lose your credibility when you threaten somebody with a plan that is ludicrous.

To close, I would say the government members can be very proud of the budget. It is not my Ontario and I will gladly fight the budget and you in the next election.

The Acting Chair: Comments and questions?

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm pleased to comment, briefly obviously, on the speech by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. I just want to dwell on a couple of points.

The first is one of the points that he made, and I know he speaks to this particular point very credibly because of his business background. In particular, he was reminding us about the insanity of the tax cut this government has ventured upon and how just from a straight business sense it doesn't make any sense to go and borrow \$25 billion to \$30 billion to add to the public debt in order to fund the tax cut. It just boggles the mind to have this government continue to put this province through the kinds of cuts that we are being put through: cuts to our health care system, cuts to our school system, cuts to our social services system.

Interjections.

Mr Silipo: Members across are saying, "Who created the debt?" They are having no hesitation about adding to the debt. They're adding to the debt, and all for what? All to pay for the tax cut, all to pay for that tax cut that we know is not benefiting the average citizen in the province, because the few dollars in additional cuts that those families and individuals will get, they are more than paying for through the additional property taxes that they are paying and the additional taxes they're paying and will be paying through the variety of fees that will be added through one layer of government or another, increases in tuition fees, and the list goes on.

We saw in this budget more of the kind of smoke and mirrors that we have come to see this government do. In fact, we are seeing that in every area of the budget that we look at. One of the fundamental things that of course is missing from this budget is any real sense that any of this is going to do what Mike Harris promised during the last election when he said that all of this is being done in order to create 725,000 jobs. They know they will get nowhere near that target.

1740

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to respond to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. Normally I have a great deal of respect for the member and his financial background and knowledge, and they are very sound comments on occasion. However, I'm looking at what I'm reading in the papers — these are other views — and it's very, very supportive of what our Minister of Finance has brought forward: wide support for the 3.4% cut in personal income tax, something allowing people to stimulate the economy; most importantly, the support given and shown both in dollars and in the supporting arguments for health care and education, most importantly the co-op education tax credit to be maintained and recognition of the 15% tax credit for the computer animation courses that the member for Mississauga South spoke on.

More directly, I want to read a couple of things from a book that I think Mr Phillips should take some responsibility for, being their finance critic.

Balance the budget within four years: How was he going to do that? Ask yourself the question if you are watching today. Was he going to do it through tax cuts?

How was he going to reduce and balance the budget? Ask the question.

Cut spending by \$4 billion: How was he going to cut spending and balance the budget? Ask yourself the question, if you are watching today, what is he speaking about? There is no substance at all to what he said.

Cut taxes by 5%: That's right in their book; I'm reading it. I want him to refute, in his two minutes, what he's talking about.

Implement core education program changes: It's all here. Clearly he talked about education funding, and I'm just going to spend a minute on that.

The property taxpayer of Ontario should be satisfied because our finance minister said he's going to freeze that portion of the tax bill for three years and he's also going to be looking at what I call a tax cut for people who are working. Some 91% of the people who work in this province will receive a tax cut of 30% or more, putting the money back in the taxpayers' pockets.

This is a good budget.

Mr Sergio: I am delighted to take a few seconds and respond as well. I wish to congratulate the member for Scarborough-Agincourt on his time on the budget. Yes, he has addressed exactly the most salient points that are missing within the budget.

It is nothing to be proud of; it's not a document to be proud of. There is nothing for the people who need the most attention from the government, and it's very sad. It's very sad for the government side, it is very sad for the minister, that he has missed a wonderful opportunity to provide in the budget for the most needy in our society, for the most neglected, forgotten group, and that is our seniors. There is absolutely nothing, nothing at all, but of course he doesn't care. What he is blinded with is to carry out his agenda and provide a tax cut that got him into power, that they promised to the rich people, which they don't need, and they must proceed with that. It's most unfortunate.

When we look at this, we have really missed the boat here when they couldn't take into consideration the injured workers. Look what they did to the injured workers.

They are willing to give the money back to those who don't need it at the expense of the least fortunate: the poor, the unemployed, the injured workers, the students, the seniors. What provision are they making for those people? I think the minister had a wonderful opportunity, and he has missed the boat. He has really turned his back on those poor people.

Speaking of jobs, where are the jobs?

So there is nothing to be proud of, and the member is to be congratulated on his speech on the budget.

Mr Bisson: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt, as always, did his homework in taking a look at this.

One of the things that he said at the very beginning, which I think is very indicative of what this budget is all about, was that a budget is about governments making choices. It seems to me that this government has been very consistent in the choices it has made. They have decided at every opportunity to give a break to those people in our society who can most afford either to pay taxes or to get services for themselves because they are well-to-do. In the case of other people — people on

welfare, people who are unemployed and looking for work, people on WCB or just the working poor — the government have turned their backs on that group of people and said, "We are not going to assist you in the way that you were assisted in the past."

A case in point is the tax cut. If you take a look at the tax cut the government is giving, who does it benefit? That is the question you have to ask. It benefits those people with incomes above \$65,000 to \$70,000 a year.

But what's even more interesting is what they've done in this particular budget with the banks, because they've said, "If the banks go out to do what they should be doing in the first place, what is their job, to lend money to small businesses, to assist small businesses to create opportunities for investment and helping create jobs, we are going to give those banks a tax credit in order to earn back some of the money they've lent out to those small businesses."

I find it pretty interesting that the government made that choice, because it says, "Rather than trying to help those businesses by other means" — such as we did when we were government, through programs like the heritage fund, which this government underspent by \$18 million last year — "we're going to give yet another tax break to the banks for doing what they should be doing in the first place, which is helping small businesses to get off the ground and get the capital they need."

I think budgets are about choices; this government has made its choice. It's with big business and it does not stand up for the individual working class.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has two minutes to respond.

Mr Phillips: I appreciate all the comments. I'm like everybody else; the day after the budget you're flipping through the papers. This is May 7. I found, "Concerned Seniors Pay Property Tax the Easy Way. With the threat of megacity comes the possibility of increased property taxes. This will affect everyone, but the hardest hit will be seniors." They recognize what you're doing and this organization has sprung up and they've got an idea "that will leave the homeowners to enjoy the full benefits during their lifetime, knowing that it does not require repayment until they die."

The reason I point that out is there's no question the downloading, the dumping of costs on to property taxes is going to take property taxes up. Anybody who's looked at it agrees with that. The government, in the budget, decided to eliminate a \$666-million municipal support grant. It's gone; January 1, 1998, it will go to zero. So who now has to pick it up? The municipalities.

Things like this struck me the day after the budget. That's the kind of thing that's going to happen. I remember Mike Harris spending millions of dollars of hard-working, decent, honest people's tax money for his — remember that electrical thing? He's down in the basement, the wires are all over and he's saying, "I'm going to fix the wires." This budget does exactly the opposite: We've now got the wires all screwed up.

Finally, the auto workers in St Catharines are particularly upset because Mike Harris obviously has got it all wrong. They're not making \$84,000; they're making a reasonable wage and working hard.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): There are so many things in this budget that I would like to have the opportunity to respond to but I'm going to focus my comments, at least initially, on children. I am most disturbed about what's happening in the area of child care, so I'd like to take some time to discuss that.

I must reflect on last year's budget. We have to start there. Over a number of years in this province previous governments, Tory, Liberal and New Democrat, have invested in increasing the access to high-quality, affordable, regulated child care in this province. Last year the finance minister, in his 1996 budget, made an announcement which to some people seemed that the government of the day was actually continuing that tradition and they were going to invest mightily in child care.

In fact, I have a copy of the finance minister's 1996 Ontario budget speech here and I'd like to refer to a couple of things he said with respect to his announcement last year on child care funding. In the section on assisting parents and their children, he says, "We will increase the province's support for child care, bringing it to the highest level in the history of the province." That's a very strong statement: "the highest level in the history of the province."

1750

He goes on a couple of paragraphs later to actually make the announcement: "I am announcing today an enhancement of our child care funding that will provide over the next five years an additional \$200 million in support over current levels. This year we will spend \$600 million on child care — the highest in Ontario's history."

You may wonder, members opposite, when the Premier and the finance minister stand up and answer questions and say, on a whole range of policy areas and program areas, "We're doing more than any other government in the history of this province, more than any other government in the history of this country." The next time the Premier gets up I'm sure he's going to say, "We're doing more than any other government in the history of the entire universe." Maybe he'll go to the world and then the universe, I don't know. The superlatives have been growing out of control, but the fact is that the facts don't support the superlatives.

Let me talk about what happened between last year and this year. Going into that 1996 Ontario budget, the amount allocated for child care in this province was \$560 million. The finance minister made this announcement: \$200 million over the next five years, the first \$40 million of that to be in the 1996-97 budget year, bringing that up to \$600 million, and I just read to you: "This year we will spend \$600 million on child care — the highest in Ontario's history."

Very shortly after that bold statement, that grandiose announcement, the Minister of Community and Social Services put a freeze on the new money and said, "We're not going to spend any of it until we're ready," and we know that up to last week still not a penny of that had been spent. That \$40 million that was announced and heralded with much fanfare by the government was not spent; not a penny of that was spent last year. We know

it's because the government has admitted they put a freeze on it.

The finance minister fully admits that was a broken promise and that money wasn't spent. In fact he has said on the public airwaves that it's a disappointment to him that they didn't spend that, that they broke that promise. The Premier, in answer to a question from me, said he was sorry that had happened. So that has been acknowledged. I just say that so there's no dispute in this House about that point.

If you look at the budget plan set out in the 1996-97 budget — that's last year's budget, when he made that grand announcement of the new \$40 million for last year and \$200 million over the next five years — you can see how that money was allocated. It was \$40 million in 1996-97, the year just past. That money went into the base spending, so the base coming into this year's budget was \$600 million. Another \$40 million was to be added this year — that's 80 million new dollars in total — which would take it up to \$640 million; another \$40 million next year — that's \$120 million of the \$200 million announced; in the fourth year it was to be taken up to \$160 million — that's another \$40 million; and in the fifth year, the last year of his five-year announcement, another \$40 million takes it up to the \$200 million. You can see how the math works. It's quite straightforward and it's set out very clearly. We all knew what the expectation was.

We did know that the \$40 million wasn't spent last year investing in children. We know that not one new child care space was created. We also know, by the way, as a result of the government's cuts to municipalities and downloading of costs to municipalities that have happened over the last year and a half, and cuts to programs like Jobs Ontario child care funding that were there, that municipalities, stretched as they are, have dropped their share of subsidies for a number of spaces, and therefore the province doesn't have to pay their 80% share and those spaces have disappeared in the province. There are over 9,000 subsidy spaces we've been able to account for that have disappeared. I suspect it's higher than that, but that's a number I feel comfortable and confident in using, even though I think the number is probably much higher.

As opposed to spending 40 million new dollars — that didn't get spent — and with the cancellation of those spaces and the municipalities no longer having their 20% share, it actually means that the government spent less. Not only was not one new child care space created, but we lost over 9,000 spaces.

Let's fast-forward from there to Tuesday of this week for the finance minister's new announcement. We know that the Minister of Community and Social Services has done a review in child care, and I'm most distressed at the proposals she has put forward for the reform of child care. I can assure you that those proposals will mean doing away with, dismantling the high-quality regulated child care system. It really does move it to the for-profit and to the informal sector, the unregulated sector, and I think you'll see that unfold over the next little while.

On Tuesday the finance minister made an announcement which has import in three different areas. One, it has import with respect to what it says about the level of

funding that the government is providing to support parents and children seeking child care. Two, it has import with respect to what the government's intentions are in terms of how public funds are used to support child care — is it in the regulated or the unregulated sector? Three, it has import with respect to how this government is dealing with the issues of child poverty. Those are the three things I would like to go through.

Let me start with the finance, with the numbers, and get that out of the way. I think the human impact is much more important, but you need to know and understand what the situation is with respect to the numbers. The finance minister did admit on Tuesday that he hadn't spent the \$40 million, and what he said was, "I'm spending it now." He announced a new child care tax credit. That child care tax credit works something like this: Parents, families with children, whose income is under \$40,000 will be eligible to apply for this refundable tax credit. There's a sliding scale in terms of how much they get back, under \$40,000 down to \$20,000 family income. Those under \$20,000 family income will get the full benefit; there's not a sliding scale any more. That full benefit is \$400 for a child.

I'll comment in a moment in terms of what value that will be and how that will work, but the rules of the system are that of course you have to spend the money and have the receipts and file them with your income tax in order to get the tax credit back. The minister said, "I'm sorry I didn't spend that \$40 million in 1996, but I'm spending it today, in 1997." I was sitting here during the budget speech and I picked up the background document to go through it and it became very clear to me that that money is allocated to a 1997 tax credit.

Mr Speaker, I know you earn a salary like I do; I know you file your taxes and I know you file your taxes at the end of the tax year. Picture this: You're a family, you've just heard about this new child care tax credit that's available to you, you have child care expenses and you fit into the low-income group that is targeted. You have to go through the year, file your taxes — when? In April, let's say, of 1998. You're going to get the money back some time following filing your taxes. The finance minister isn't going to spend that money to refund that tax credit to you until the 1998 fiscal year, the 1998 budget. I remind you that what he said to us in this House, what he said on CBC and what he said to other reporters was, "I'm sorry I didn't spend the \$40 million in 1996, but I've spent it now, in 1997." The fact is not a penny of that gets spent until 1998.

He says, "I have to show it in this year's budget because of accounting rules." Fair enough; I don't have a problem with that. But don't try and con people by saying you're spending the money now; you're not. You're showing it as a projected expenditure, but it's not going to be spent until 1998. What does that mean? That means the \$40 million announced last year and not spent won't be spent this year. None of that heralded announcement is actually going out to help children as we speak.

Beyond that, I remind you of the progression of that announcement: \$40 million last year, growing to \$80 million this year, to \$120 million next year, to \$160 million to \$200 million. Remember that? It's in the

budget plan. For two days in a row members who have been here during question period will know that I have asked the finance minister a very simple question: Is the rest of that money still in your budget plan?

You said the \$40 million from last year is now going to be dedicated to the child tax credit; it's now no longer available for more subsidies. I understand that. That \$40 million in the base budget, on top of the 1995-96 base budget of \$560 million that took it up to \$600 million is dedicated to the child tax credit, but this year the budget was supposed to be \$640 million, because it grew from \$40 million to \$80 million this year. I asked him, "Where's that other \$40 million?" I asked him: "What about the money next year, the \$120 million? What about the \$160 million?" I can't get an answer from him, and I'll tell you why: I suspect it's because that money has actually disappeared from the budget altogether.

Rather than our hearing of a new additional program in this child tax credit, a portion of which is going to be funded out of \$40 million which was earmarked for subsidies but has been transferred over, added to by \$100 million as a result of a national child benefit program, instead of that being separate, that has replaced what had been announced before.

If I can total up what that means, there had been a budget of \$560 million for child care when all of this started. The government announced they were adding 200 million new dollars to that. That takes you to \$760 million, part of that now going to a tax credit, plus the \$100 million from the national child benefit, the savings that accrue to the government in welfare costs that they are going to reinvest into this child tax credit. That takes you to \$860 million.

I'd like you to take a look and see if you can find out if that's what the total spending on child care subsidies and child care tax credits is projected to be. In fact, that promise of \$200 million is a broken promise. It has been reneged on; it has been pulled out. You've taken \$40 million of it and transferred it over to the tax credit, and that remains, and you're funding the \$100 million to enhance that from a totally separate pot of money that comes as a result of federal changes, \$160 million.

There are two other areas that I want to speak to, but at this point, Mr Speaker, I move the adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm next Monday.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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Monday 12 May 1997

Lundi 12 mai 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 12 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 12 mai 1997

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NURSING WEEK

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I am pleased to remind members of this provincial Parliament and Ontarians that this week is designated as Nursing Week.

Registered nurses are an integral part of our health care system. On the front lines of health care delivery, nurses have witnessed many changes. Through difficult times the people of this province have benefited from the creative and innovative solutions brought forward by registered nurses. Registered nurses think in broad terms: of populations, health, healthy communities and healthy public policy. Registered nurses know that people and families need practical tools to learn how to stay healthy.

"Sharing the Challenge," the theme for this year's Nursing Week, is designed to emphasize how registered nurses, along with other health care providers and consumers, are working to ensure our provincial health care system continues to deliver quality care. In Ontario, our citizens can access registered nurses through information hotlines, at community health centres, at home and at work. More than ever before we are realizing the value of asking for a registered nurse. Using the experience, expertise and commitment of the more than 100,000 registered nurses working in all parts of the health system will make a real difference to the health of Ontarians.

I wish to add that it's vital that we see today, when the health services restructuring adjustment board has been demolished by this government, some kind of commitment to the role of nurses, to the role of qualified health workers in general, to take their part in our health system on the part of this government.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Today we are going to be debating Bill 96, the Tenant Protection Act, or the so-called Tenant Protection Act. As you know, 33% of people live in apartments. Many of these people will be affected by the Tenant Protection Act.

The effect of this act will not be to strengthen the rights of tenants, but rather to weaken them. It will be easier to evict tenants. Landlords will be able to get away with doing less maintenance and repair work. When a tenant moves out there will be no legal limit on the rent the landlord can charge the next tenant. The rent registry will be shut down. The Rental Housing Protection Act

will be repealed, and it will be easier for landlords to demolish rental units, convert them to condominiums or carry out luxury renovations.

What I think this will do is to make housing less affordable for tenants, many of whom are low-income tenants, many of whom are seniors with less income now, obviously, than they would have had when they were young. Many of these are people with disabilities. This act will do nothing to assist these most vulnerable citizens, but in effect will weaken their rights and make it more impossible for them to find affordable housing.

VICTORIAN ORDER OF NURSES CENTENNIAL

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): Today I'm delighted to pay tribute to an organization that has served the health and social needs of generations of Ontarians. One hundred years ago the Victorian Order of Nurses formed in response to the hardship and suffering of people in remote areas of Canada. In Wellington, VON Guelph-Wellington-Dufferin has been providing health care and related services for local communities since 1919.

My own family is greatly indebted to our local VON, for when I was a toddler my mother became severely ill with rheumatoid arthritis and was in and out of hospital for more than a year. When she came home she was confined to her bed. During this period VON nurses and homemakers were a constant presence in our home, caring for my mom, my four sisters and me. Through the years, as my mother has fought the debilitating effects of arthritis, the VON has always provided caring service whenever we've needed it.

I know how important the VON is to our community, and recently I had an opportunity to meet with VON representatives serving Wellington. They raised several issues that I hope the Minister of Health will consider and review. Among the areas identified were the role of not-for-profit organizations in health care, recognition and understanding of the work of the VON's volunteers and nurses, and the VON's concerns regarding its ability to compete for home care services with private sector suppliers.

In closing, I'd like to thank everyone in the VON for their work serving communities. May your successes continue in the future.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): In the coming days the government will introduce changes to the way it provides income support to Ontarians who are now

eligible for general welfare and family benefits. The changes have the potential to profoundly affect the lives of people living with certain disabilities and those who will become disabled in the future.

The government is expected to narrow its definition of "disability." If that happens, people living with the special burdens of mental illness may see a serious reduction in the level of their support.

The government is providing assurances that individuals already receiving support will not lose it under the new system. However, I implore the government to consider those who would not be covered under a grandfather clause. The realities of their lives — who have yet to be diagnosed — will be just as difficult. The circumstances they will encounter no one would choose. It will be on the government's conscience if it closes the door on the needs of these individuals — just to be able to save a few dollars.

The responsibility of government will always remain the support of people who require assistance at difficult points of their lives. Let the record of this government show that it did not fail them.

BANKING SERVICES

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On Friday last, I joined with City Councillor Rob Maxwell and a number of constituents in my riding in front of the Bank of Montreal branch at the corner of Dupont Street and Symington Avenue to support the citizens who were protesting the shutting down of that branch and the merging of that branch with a branch over a kilometre away.

The point I wanted to make here today was the point many of the residents made there, which is the irony that you have here a bank that prides itself in being people-friendly, a bank that as the song goes is changing to adapt with the times, and yet it seems to have forgotten that in some instances good old-fashioned, in-branch banking is the best way to provide service to its long-time customers, customers like Joanne Lofeud, who has been a customer at that particular branch for 38 years and as a senior finds it difficult to walk the additional kilometre to the next branch.

Although it is not an issue on which, obviously, the provincial Parliament and government can be involved, it is an issue on which certainly, as a local representative, I again today want to join in supporting the residents who are saying to the Bank of Montreal, "Find some money within your profit margin to continue to provide the kind of support and services your customers have served you well for for the last number of years."

1340

NURSING WEEK

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I am proud to rise in the House today to mark very important events: National Nursing Week and International Nursing Day.

We are proud of the extensive reinvestments our government has made specifically directed towards nurses. For example, last year the Minister of Health announced the largest single reinvestment in community services: \$170 million. This announcement will benefit

some 80,000 patients across Ontario in the communities and will help to create 4,400 new jobs for nurses and for home care workers.

We have also provided \$1.75 million to McMaster University and U of T to operate the nursing effectiveness, utilization and outcomes research unit to advise the government on the type of nurses and nursing practices needed in the future, and \$1 million for the province-wide nursing project to create centres of excellence to encourage the continual development of improved nursing practices.

Most important, our government recently introduced the Expanded Nursing Services for Patients Act that will legally recognize nurse practitioners so that Ontario residents can have improved access to primary care.

On a final note, today is the birthday of a very important nurse: Florence Nightingale. If she were alive today, she would be applauding the above initiatives to bring health care into the 21st century as we've had the support of the ONA and the RNAO.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): If Premier Harris had any doubt about the views of residents of western Niagara on the closing of West Lincoln Memorial Hospital as an acute care hospital, that doubt should be completely removed by the almost unanimous results of a plebiscite held in the western portion of the Niagara region on Saturday.

With a total of 15,594 people casting ballots, 15,524 voted yes to the continued operation of West Lincoln Memorial Hospital with acute care services, medical and surgical beds, obstetrical services, intensive care and a 24-hour genuine emergency department.

The residents of Grimsby, Lincoln and West Lincoln gave an astounding 99.6% endorsement to the hospital and an overwhelming thumbs-down to the Conservative health policy which calls for the closing of hospitals, despite the assurance of PC Leader Mike Harris on a provincial television debate, who said, "Well, certainly I can guarantee you that it's not my plan to close hospitals."

Congratulations are in order to the more than 300 volunteers who operated 41 polling stations during the citizens vote. This is an outcome that the Conservative government cannot ignore any more than the over 54,000 people who have signed the petition demanding that the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines remain open.

Residents in St Catharines, Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and western Niagara say they would rather have their hospitals than the foolish tax cut for the rich people of this province.

NURSING WEEK

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It is important for all of us to celebrate together with the nurses of this province the fact that this week is Nursing Week and that we owe a great deal to the nursing profession for their delivery of health care in this province.

The Ontario Nurses' Association, which represents 45,000 registered nurses and allied health care professionals, has this morning released a public opinion poll.

This is a companion piece to the poll the association released last year. In that poll they had looked at the opinions of nurses in the field and asked them what their opinion was of the changes in the health care system, and overwhelmingly those professionals expressed concern about the changes that are being caused by the lack of funding and the cutbacks by this government.

Today's results are extremely important because this was a poll that was done of the general public, and the poll overwhelmingly confirmed that 94% of Ontarians believe registered nurses play an important role in ensuring that the public receives quality health care; that 92% believe health care would improve with better cooperation and coordination between health provider agencies such as hospitals, nursing homes, doctors' offices and front-line health clinics; that 89% believe that increasing funding for health promotion and illness prevention activities will prevent health problems that will cost us a great deal in the future.

I endorse nursing —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

BUDGET

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): It's my pleasure to stand in the House today and offer my congratulations to the Minister of Finance. I spent this last weekend, as I do every weekend, speaking with the constituents in my riding of Perth. Although many continue to have concerns about the future of Ontario, mainly due to the financial mismanagement of previous Liberal and NDP governments, optimism is on the rise. This is especially noticeable following the 1997 budget, which was released by the Minister of Finance last Tuesday.

My constituents recognize hard work and are encouraged by the success of the plan this government is implementing. We promised jobs, hope, growth and opportunity to the people of Ontario, and the residents of Perth county are aware we are delivering on those promises.

By reducing the deficit, we are ensuring a more stable environment for business to grow and create jobs. The Ontario economy has responded in a renewed spirit of confidence and optimism. The creation of community small business investment funds, with the support of a network of enterprise centres for small business, will surely be of benefit to all Ontario.

Of considerable importance to the people of Perth county is the government's promotion of job creation in rural Ontario. The agriculture sector is an important contributor to jobs, growth and exports in Ontario. The announcement of a three-year, \$30-million rural job strategy will boost job creation throughout rural Ontario. I'm proud to say our plan is working.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. On Friday we learned that the coroner's jury looking into the death of Shanay Johnson had completed their deliber-

ations and had 107 recommendations for the government of Ontario and agencies responsible for the safekeeping of our children — 107 recommendations.

Ever since these tragedies were made public we've been asking you to restore funding to our children's aid societies. Put back the \$17 million you've stolen from our province's children. That's the only way we can describe it, Minister, because it was an irresponsible act on your part. The coroner's jury is pleading with you to restore this funding.

Today, in light of these recommendations, as a first step, will you restore funding to children's aid societies? It's a small price to pay —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Lawrence, thank you. Minister?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I think the jury is to be commended for an excellent report. They've given a great deal of thought. It was a very difficult process for them to go through. We are going through those recommendations in great detail. We're very pleased to see that many of those recommendations are steps we already have under way because we believe and we agree that the system — there have been some very important flaws pointed out in the system and we must move very quickly to fix them.

Mr Cordiano: The minister would like us to believe she agrees that an overhaul of the entire system is necessary, and so would the coroner's jury agree that an overhaul is necessary. But when you begin that overhaul by cutting 5% from the budgets of the children's aid societies, how can anyone take you seriously?

You're not making children a priority. That's what's missing here. You are not making children your priority. It's your priority, as Minister of Community and Social Services. There is no evidence that you plan to put children on the legislative agenda, as is strongly recommended by the coroner's jury.

Given the fact that there are two more inquests ongoing and four more yet to come, we hope your plan does not include waiting for those to finish before you proceed with your initiatives. Will you make a commitment today to introduce to this House, before the end of this session, legislation protecting the children of our province?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate that the honourable member believes that throwing money at a flawed system is the only solution. If he will read those recommendations very carefully, and if he listens to what the workers on the front lines have said, if he's listened to what the professionals involved have said, if he's listened to all the messages that have come through, what is very clear is that there are many things that need to be done: training; better support for the workers; better information systems so children aren't falling through the cracks; yes, a review of the legislation. There are many things that need to be done, there are many things we are undertaking, because we do take this very seriously.

1350

Mr Cordiano: Minister, we do not agree with throwing money at every problem, but we don't agree with taking money away from those problems as a way to make it better. That's what you're suggesting: Take

money away and it'll solve the problem, it'll go away magically.

You and your government are the first to complain about too much time studying problems and not enough action. Today we're asking you to take action. This morning our offices spoke with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. They are prepared to move ahead immediately and implement the recommendations, which they describe as fair and balanced.

Everyone agrees with the recommendations. What's stopping you? Introduce the necessary legislation today. Reviewing and examining won't save lives in the future, but additional resources and changes in legislation will certainly do that. Take action today. We're asking you to make those moves, undertake to make those initiatives possible, not some time next year or some time down the road. Take action today, Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Perhaps the honourable member thinks that going out and making a great, grand pronouncement and getting a great headline is taking action that will help the children who need our assistance, but that is not what is called for in the circumstance.

I have met with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies officials. I've spoken to front-line workers. I've spoken to the Metro children's aid society. What is interesting is they do not believe that we can introduce legislation tomorrow with a quick fix. As a matter of fact, they have many things that they want us to work with them on as we improve the system, and we are certainly prepared to do that. We have also said —

Mr Cordiano: That is not what they're saying. They're saying, "We agree with the recommendations."

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect, I was at the meeting. The honourable member was not. The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies are quite prepared to work with us; we're very prepared to work them and to support improvements in the system.

I think it's also worth noting that in last week's budget we have put forward money which will support the ministry and the children's aid societies in making the improvements in the system.

TRUCKING AND BUS SAFETY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. Beginning in December of this year, indeed prior to it, we have heard homily after homily after homily from you about the importance of road safety. In February of this year, amid great fanfare, with a great press conference and people all around you who are concerned about the safety of our highways, you brought forward your bill to make Ontario highways safe. In repeated correspondence to your office, in repeated press conferences you have talked about the importance of road safety and that your bill would address the issue.

On Friday, the Premier said it's too draconian. The Premier says it goes too far. In February, you said we had to have it. In March, you said we had to have it. You accuse the opposition of delaying tactics.

Minister, who's right? Are you right or is the Premier right? What are you going to do about it to make these roads in Ontario a lot safer than they are today?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I have no intentions of revoking the bill.

Mr Duncan: That's all very interesting, because you haven't brought it forward. You haven't brought it forward since February. We've offered to give you day after day after day in this House. We've offered to pass it in one day. I don't think you're giving us the full answer.

We think you've got two problems. First of all, officials in your ministry now tell us that the absolute liability provisions in that bill won't stand up in court. That's what your people are saying. We now have legal opinions from some of your biggest supporters that it won't stand up in court. If it's not the absolute liability provisions, has the trucking industry got to the government? Is that what it is?

We have had homily after homily after homily from you and nothing but talk and empty rhetoric. Bring the bill forward today. We'll deal with it, we'll pass it and we'll make Ontario's roads safe again.

Hon Mr Palladini: The member's rhetoric speaks just as well as their safety approach when they were in government: They did absolutely nothing. Just rhetoric, that's all the member is saying.

The wheel separation bill was supposed to be part of a major spring road safety bill. It was because of their continuing support and also saying and badgering: "We need higher fines. We need stronger legislation." We advanced the wheel separation bill, but all they wanted to do was create a filibuster and waste Ontarians' money on needless hijacking of the Legislature. We were not able to introduce the bill when we should have because of your lack of support.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Do you want a point of order?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): He would be misleading the House if he said that, so I know he didn't say it.

The Speaker: That's out of order. Member for St Catharines, you can't say that. You must withdraw that statement.

Mr Bradley: He would be if he did.

The Speaker: You can't say that either. You must withdraw.

Mr Bradley: If I would be saying that, I would withdraw it. I withdraw it.

The Speaker: Final supplementary, the member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Mr Duncan: The wheels aren't only coming off trucks; they're coming off the minister's credibility. Everything you've said since December is just an absolute crock. You had no intention of bringing this bill forward. You set it up so it would fail.

If you were serious, why haven't you responded to the recommendations of Target '97? Bring forward the bill today and we'll deal with it expeditiously. We'll deal with the Target '97 recommendations expeditiously. Let's bring it forward and put your credibility back on track, and let's make the roads in Ontario a lot safer than they are because of your dilly-dallying. Stop blaming everyone

else. Will you bring that bill forward today or next week? We'll deal with it and we'll deal with as expeditiously as possible.

Hon Mr Palladini: I will compare this government's safety record to yours when you were in government any time. We have done more for safety on our highways in two years than your government did in their whole term. Your government did not even enforce legislation that was in place.

It took this government to enforce the aggregate haulers, I want to remind the member, something your government never did. On top of that, our record speaks for itself. We have stopped over 37,000 truckers out there. That's twice as many as your government did during your mandate. We have taken trucks off the road more than your government ever did during its mandate. Our record is intact, and I'll stack it up against yours any day of the week.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. One year ago our NDP caucus brought forward a resolution calling on the government to introduce a bill of rights for Ontario children. The resolution speaks to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and eight key principles were underlined: standards of living, standards of health, nutrition, protection from abuse, quality child care, social security.

It was a year ago that we brought that forward, and it received support from most members in this House. Now, a year later, the coroner's inquest into Shanay Johnson's death recommends that the provincial government establish explicit rights for children with the Child and Family Services Act. That's their first recommendation.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The question, please.

Mr Hampton: Minister, are you going to do that now? You had the chance a year ago. Are you finally going to do it now?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I appreciate the honourable member's concern. I think the bill of rights would certainly be something we should consider in a rewrite of the legislation.

Mr Hampton: On April 25 of this year, my colleague the member for Beaches-Woodbine wrote you a letter requesting that you refer the Child and Family Services Act to the standing committee on social development for an open and public review. You haven't responded to that request. Last week the coroner's inquest which examined the death of Shanay Johnson made their own far-reaching recommendations on changes to the legislation, on children's aid societies, on training and on other things. What my colleague is asking you to do is what the coroner's inquest is recommending that you do.

1400

Minister, you can't act unilaterally here. You've got to involve all the stakeholders. This has to be a non-partisan review. Everybody who is concerned about children has

to be involved. Will you commit to holding those open, public hearings so that all the stakeholders can be involved in this? Will you make that commitment today?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I agree that we do not need quick, knee-jerk reactions in terms of how to solve the very serious and very significant problems that are here. I've talked to the association of children's aid societies about putting in place an action plan and also about the process that they would like to see that might actually have some productive input.

What I don't want to do is subject the front-line workers or the parents or the other people involved or the families involved in the system to more public hearings where everybody gets to generate a headline. What I'm interested in doing is trying to have a credible process that gets that input from all the stakeholders in a way that will be extremely helpful.

The Speaker: Final supplementary, member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Minister, I appreciate your comments about not wanting a quick reaction and needing to have a response that is fulsome in terms of the review of the legislation. But I'm concerned about your approach, because it sounds like it's behind closed doors, and there are many people, CASs and beyond, who have a stake in this legislation that protects our children.

I want to return to the matter of funding, because I was disturbed when you responded to a question earlier and you talked about throwing money at the problem, that's not the solution. You've used that phrase a lot through this process. You've also talked about the CASs having access to contingency funds. The recommendations of the jury's panel said very clearly that the funding for the CAS is insufficient, and the distribution of funds continues to focus on contingency rather than on base-line, and that has led to a lack of long-term planning and erosion in preventive services.

Minister, you have to work out a new funding model. I'm sure you know that and agree with that. But in the meantime, those front-line services are stretched beyond belief. It is, I believe, incumbent upon your government to take those first steps by restoring the money that you've cut and working out in the long term the new funding mechanisms. Will you at least consider that?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I've already said that because we are going to be assuming 100% funding for children's aid societies in this province, that opens up a very good possibility to examine how they are funded. I think there have been flaws in the contingency system but it has been a support for those many agencies. We're certainly prepared to take a look at how they're funded to ensure that they have the support they need.

I think it's also important to recognize that we are spending \$800,000 for training for children's aid society workers. Clearly we need to do a better job of that and we agree with the children's aid society on that. We want to improve that.

We also are working on the new data, the computer system, so that people are not falling through the cracks, children are not being lost in the system, which is one of the things that has been flagged very much. The money

is in place for that, and we will be completing that work hopefully some time this year.

We have also put out almost \$45 million for the prevention and intervention support so that children do not need children's aid society work, as well as the money that was announced in the budget last week.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Finance. Minister, your government has created a real crisis for municipalities, schools and hospitals. You have combined budget cuts with shutdowns and now downloading, and it's affecting some 800,000 workers. You call it restructuring, but what it boils down to is that more and more people are losing their jobs in hospitals, in schools and in municipalities. Last Friday we learned that you're continuing to fail on your jobs promise. There are 29,000 more people unemployed in Ontario now than when you became the government.

Minister, what are you going to do? We know your cuts to hospitals, to schools and to municipalities are going to put more people out of work. It's creating a drag in terms of jobs. What are you going to do to avoid more job losses? What are you going to do to avoid a more serious deterioration in terms of jobs in the province?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): There are not job losses in the province of Ontario. The reality is that in the last two months alone, 60,000 net new jobs have been created in the province — in the last two months alone 60,000.

Mr Hampton: It's interesting, this Minister of Finance thinks that somehow Statistics Canada never gets it right. Well, StatsCan has been around for a long time and they have been studying the job numbers for a long time. They know there are 29,000 more people unemployed in Ontario this month than when you became the government. In fact there are 528,000 people unemployed in this province, and your cuts to health care, to hospitals, to schools, to municipalities are putting more people out of work.

What is equally crazy is that you've now shut down the Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel. It was the one panel that connected out-of-work health sector workers with new jobs. In the last year alone, you have laid off 11,304 people in the hospital and health care sector. Now you're going to shut down the one agency that connected them with new jobs. Minister, this doesn't make any sense; it makes no sense. What are you going to do in the health sector, the education sector and the municipal sector to, first, avoid the job losses and, second, connect people up with new jobs?

Hon Mr Eves: Mr Speaker, through you to the leader of the third party, first of all, when he talks about how many people are unemployed, he doesn't also say that StatsCan will also tell him and everybody else, there are more people working in Ontario today than ever before in history. There are more people looking for work than ever before in history. The help wanted index at 18% speaks to that. There have been 60,000 net new jobs created in the province in the last two months alone. He

is well aware of that. He's also well aware that the federal government, in its budget, predicts that there will be between 300,000 and 350,000 jobs created in the Canadian economy this year, about half of which will be created right here in Ontario.

Speaking very specifically to his question with respect to the health sector training and adjustment program, the member is quite correct that the \$30-million program is being phased out. He also didn't bother to mention that in the budget there will be some \$2.7 billion spent in health care restructuring over the next five years, which will more than compensate for the loss of this fund.

Mr Hampton: The finance minister's answer illustrates the real problem for this government. We've got a real unemployment rate of over 30% for young people and this Minister of Finance says, "Oh, there's no problem." We've got more and more people unemployed in the province, and this minister stands up and says, "Oh, there's no problem." He calls paying severance pay to laid-off nurses investing in retraining and investing in new jobs in the health care sector. What nonsense. The money you're spending in the Ministry of Health in your so-called restructuring is simply the money it costs to throw nurses and health care workers into the street, nothing more.

When you shut down the Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel you're shutting down the only registry that exists that connects unemployed health care workers with possible new opportunities. You're shutting down the only organization that has any knowledge and experience in taking people out of institutions that are being shut down and hopefully connecting them to new opportunities. What you should be doing is doing the same thing in the education sector and the municipal sector. Will you do that, or are you just going to throw people out on the street, give them a few bucks —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Mr Eves: To the honourable member, the \$2 billion-plus that will be spent on health care restructuring is not simply severance costs. I know you like to paint that picture. The overwhelming majority of it is not. I know you want to protect your own little program that you created for health care workers that you were unemploying while you were in government; however, we are spending \$2.7 billion, not \$30 million. There is a little bit of a difference, and I'm sure you'll appreciate that.

If your government had kept pace with the job creation the rest of Canada had between the years 1990 and 1995 when you were in government, there would have been 150,000 jobs created in Ontario. Instead, you lost 10,000 net new jobs in that five-year period. We'll stack our record up against yours any time. There were six times as many jobs created in the last two months as you lost in five years.

1410

TRUCKING AND BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. This House has before it a bill which will save children's lives. Bill 78 received the

unanimous support of the House and was referred to the resources development committee where it has sat for over six months because you refuse to deal with it. There are 810,000 children riding school buses daily. We're counting on you to pass that bill.

The parents of Ryan Marcuzzi, who was tragically killed because of a careless driver, are waiting for you to pass the bill. Over 30,000 people have signed petitions demanding that you pass Bill 78.

Bill 78 calls for vehicle liability. School bus drivers and the police know that vehicle liability is the only measure which will provide Ontario school children with the safety on the roads they require and provide for convictions. When are you going to pass this bill to save children's lives here in Ontario?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I believe I've already thanked the member for his bill. It was something I supported, and I'm also pleased you have a lot of support from our colleagues in the House.

What I want to say to the member is that the safety bill we will be implementing is going to cover some of the things the member has proposed. I'm hoping we can actually expedite what he wanted to do and encompass and make it part of our bill. I'm very supportive and this government's very supportive of making sure bus safety is a priority, and we're going to maintain that.

Mr Hoy: Minister, quit stalling. Eleven children have been killed and over 80 injured in the past five years by careless drivers who ignored school bus warning lights. You say my bill would not achieve in practice what it intends in principle: convicting drivers. You are simply wrong. My bill does exactly that. It puts the onus on the vehicle owner to act responsibly and identify the driver.

We have expert legal advice that Bill 78 is enforceable, fair and would result in convictions in a court of law. Many groups supporting the bill want to come before the committee to tell you why vehicle liability is essential to save children's lives. Minister, your commitment to school bus safety is no better than your action on truck safety. Will you give me your assurance that a vehicle liability law will be in place before the school year ends?

Hon Mr Palladini: The rhetoric they would like the people of Ontario to believe — one of the things this government has done is actually separate the two issues: truck safety and bus. The busing industry has a tremendous reputation as far as safety is concerned, and I believe safety has been practised and is at the very top of their list, as it is at the top of my list.

One kid's life is definitely worth pursuing better alternatives. I want to say to the member that I will stack this government's record on safety, whether bus or truck, against your government's when you were the government. I have already told the member that this is just the beginning. We still have a long way to go, but safety is going to be realized in the trucking and busing industries in Ontario.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): My question is to —

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I'm going to try it again. My question is for the Minister of Transportation —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You've got a question. Member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: Again, I'll try it. My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Over two months ago you introduced legislation in this House to try to deal with the issue of wheel separations. My party, my House leader, Bud Wildman, the NDP member for Algoma, has gone to you a number of times and said, "We are prepared to give you speedy passage of that legislation." In fact, last Thursday I asked in this House for unanimous consent for that bill to be called forward this week so that we can deal with it in order to get on with the business of making our highways safer for Ontarians across this province.

My question to you is quite simple. I will be requesting unanimous consent this afternoon in order to deal with this legislation today, tout de suite, quick. My caucus and I'm sure the other caucus is prepared to give you support. Minister, will you be supporting unanimous consent in order to deal with that legislation today?

Hon Mr Palladini: Here is a party that when they were the government saw the out-of-service rate go from 22% to 43% and did nothing, absolutely nothing, when it came to safety. Here's a party that hijacked this assembly, wasted Ontario taxpayers' dollars, when you could have passed this bill before the March break. Now you say, "Let's do it now." Why didn't you do it when we had the chance to do it?

Mr Bisson: Minister, you're the guy who calls the bills. You're the government. You have 84 members on the other side of the House. It's not up to the opposition to decide when bills get called. That is the function of the government, of the government House leader. My House leader has asked you on a number of occasions to bring the bill forward.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Culture, come to order. Ministers, members, please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Lambton, thank you for being very helpful. Could you come to order as well?

Interjection.

The Speaker: And of course the member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): I'm trying to be helpful.

The Speaker: I know, but you're not being that helpful at the present time. Supplementary.

Mr Bisson: Again, Minister, I will be moving for unanimous consent in order to deal with this legislation today. I ask you again, will you vote in favour of unanimous consent so that we can deal with this bill today and we can get on with making highways safer for the motoring public of Ontario? Yes or no?

Hon Mr Palladini: Coming from a party that has broken every deal that we have made, I doubt very much if they're willing to keep this one.

The Speaker: New question. You are up on response?

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd like to take this opportunity to get back to

the member for Essex South regarding his question to me on May 6 regarding flooding in his riding. He asked me to get back on when the ministry staff had been in touch with the municipalities.

I can tell you that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been in touch with the representatives of the area municipalities. On April 11 and 14, our southwestern regional office spoke to the clerk of Mersea township, the clerk of the village of Erieau, the treasurer of the village of Erie Beach and the clerk of the township of Dover. On May 2, our southwestern regional office spoke to the treasurer of the township of Harwich.

The ministry, through the regional policy adviser, spoke directly to the member for Essex South two weeks ago regarding the flooding in his riding and assistance under the Shoreline Property Assistance Act. I understand that the member for Essex South also spoke to our regional office last week.

Notwithstanding what my ministry has done, I'd like to remind the House that the Ministry of Natural Resources —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister of Municipal Affairs. Response, member for Essex South.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): To the minister: When I spoke with the ministry, I made the two calls. So let's get that straight. I was the one who rang the telephone, they didn't.

To the other calls that were made to the municipalities, and I'd like the minister to understand this, I stood on a letter from Mersea township regarding the shoreline protection loan act. To my knowledge, the calls between ministry and municipalities were about some disaster fund. I know nothing of that. Minister, I was asking you about the shoreline loans protection act. I would like to ask the minister if he's responded to that.

1420

Hon Mr Leach: I guess that might mean that the member is withdrawing the apology he made to the regional staff in London regarding his comments.

Mr Crozier: I am not withdrawing anything.

Hon Mr Leach: I would also suggest that the member might want to explain to his constituents what happened to the program for shoreline protection. He might want to explain to them why his party cancelled the program in 1988.

Mr Crozier: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It hasn't been cancelled. The minister doesn't understand it. It is a legitimate piece of legislation.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, member for Essex South. New question, official opposition.

USER FEES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): In the absence of the Minister of Health, I'll direct my question to the minister responsible for seniors affairs. I want to bring to your attention the case of James McCooeye, a constituent of mine who is paying an absolutely impossible price for the Ministry of Health's mistakes and for your government's unconscionable decision to force seniors to pay a part of their drug costs.

Mr McCooeye is a senior whose annual income is \$15,507. He supports on this very meagre amount a spouse who is not yet 65, is unable to work and requires prescription drugs, as does Mr McCooeye. Last August the Ministry of Health mistakenly misclassified Mr McCooeye so that he had to pay his \$100 and the prescription fee for any drugs that he needed. It took until May 5 of this year to get Mr McCooeye on to the system that at least lets him pay the \$2 copayment. In the meantime, on April 1, he was told that he would have to pay his \$100 again.

My question is, do you have any idea how many other seniors are caught up in this costly and confusing mixup, and what compensation will your government —

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): First of all, I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. If she'll give me additional details, I'll be pleased to investigate it.

But I would like to comment about some of the concerns. As members of this House know, we were the last fully funded public drug plan available universally to seniors in the world. We are now the most inexpensive plan. When we announced that we were going to implement this program, the difficulty we had was the difficulty in cooperation with the federal government in determining income thresholds and sharing that private, confidential information with the government of Ontario. Our first steps with the program were awkward because we did not achieve the level of cooperation.

The second part of your question deals with the fact of the threshold of \$100, still, I might add, the least expensive drug plan in all of Canada and anywhere else that we can compare it with. But I want to reassure the member that the largest single cost problems associated with any person using the drug plan is for the hundreds and hundreds of drugs that were removed from the drug formulary by the —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mrs McLeod: So that the record can be complete, I would remind the minister that his was the government that said there would be no new fees. That was before they brought in the \$2 copayment and the prescription drug fee for seniors. I would also suggest that in Mr McCooeye's case, the first awkward steps the minister describes took from last August until May 5. The problem is that after all that confusion, all that frustration, all those costs, Mr McCooeye's problems aren't yet over. He has now been classified correctly, but he's being told that he can't be reimbursed for his 1996-97 drug costs because the arbitrary cutoff date for last year's plan was April 30.

Minister, the problems, the delays getting Mr McCooeye properly on to the right plan were all related to errors made by the Ministry of Health and to its delays, yet we are being told that there are absolutely no exceptions to the cutoff rule. Surely you would agree that Mr McCooeye, who is supporting himself and his wife on \$15,507 a year, should not have to pay the costs of the Ministry of Health's mistakes.

I ask you not only to look into this but to ensure that there is clear direction given to Mr McCooeye that Mr McCooeye will get compensation and that the arbitrary cutoff date will not apply to any seniors who have been forced —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to assure all members of this House that seniors who were inappropriately classified will be adjusted fairly and appropriately and as quickly as possible. My understanding is that Mr McCooey is an exception, and that's why I will look into the matter directly and personally.

I want to remind the members that the cost to the Ontario drug benefit plan is growing. If you read the budget carefully, it is over budget by \$127 million in Ontario. The solution that every single government in Canada has done, when faced with that overwhelming issue, has been to increase the copayment. I'm here to tell you and all members of this House that the government of Mike Harris refuses to increase these copayments like every other government in the provinces of Canada has done in the past. We've increased over 400 new drugs into the formulary in the two years we've been the government.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Ma question est au ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones. Votre gouvernement est en train de passer le projet de loi 108, qui modifie la loi sur les services pour les infractions provinciales. Avec cette loi, le procureur-général pourrait transférer aux municipalités la responsabilité d'exercer le fonctionnement des administrations et des tribunaux là où la province le faisait déjà.

Vos membres du comité de l'administration de la justice, qui traite de la question du projet de loi 108, ont refusé d'accepter une motion NPD mise de l'avant par mon collègue qui aurait garanti que les francophones qui demandent d'avoir les services offerts en français quant à ces infractions auraient pu les avoir au sein de leur municipalité. Les membres conservateurs de votre comité ont voté contre.

Monsieur le Ministre, vous avez une chance. Le projet de loi est présentement devant le comité plénier de la Chambre. Êtes-vous prêt à accepter notre motion et de garantir que les services en français vont être garantis dans cette loi pour les francophones de la province ?

L'hon Noble A. Villeneuve (ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones) : Le projet de loi 108 découlant du ministère de la Justice, je vais demander à mon collègue de répondre à votre question.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Bill 108 will be transferring provincial offence jurisdiction to municipalities. As a result of the legislation that exists in Ontario under the act that regulates our courts, there are to be guaranteed trials in the French language all over Ontario. As the jurisdiction for dealing with the Provincial Offences Act is turned over to municipalities, it will be turned over on a basis of maintaining levels of service, and we are well accepting of the fact that municipalities will be prepared to do that.

M. Bisson : Monsieur le Ministre, c'est très simple : la province de l'Ontario a mis en place la Loi 8 simplement parce que les municipalités ne sont pas prêtes à garantir que les services en français vont être offerts à la population francophone. C'est pour cette raison que tous les partis de cette assemblée, Libéraux, NPD et Conservateurs, avaient accepté cette loi à l'unanimité. Quand ces contreventions, ces infractions, vont être transférées à la population, on ne va pas pouvoir garantir dans le projet de loi 108 que les services en français seront donnés.

La loi est ici, aujourd'hui, au comité de la Chambre. Je vous demande : allez-vous accepter notre amendement qui va garantir à la communauté francophone que les services en français vont être respectés quand vous allez transférer ces services aux municipalités ?

Hon Mr Harnick: The Courts of Justice Act provides that guarantee, and the municipalities and the province and the Ministry of the Attorney General will be regulated in terms of dealing with the way the Provincial Offences Act will be devolved through agreements that will be made between the Ministry of the Attorney General and the municipalities. That will regulate the Bill 108 devolution.

The Courts of Justice Act, as well as the memorandum of understanding to be entered into between the ministry and the Attorney General, will regulate that relationship to guarantee a level of services that people want.

M. Bisson : Un point d'ordre, Monsieur le Président : Il est très clair que le procureur-général ne comprend pas exactement ce qui se passe avec la Loi 8. Pour cette raison, je demande que le ministre soit obligé de répondre à ma question à une date plus tard. Je demande une «late show».

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's not a point of order. New question.

1430

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As you know, municipal leaders from the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities met in Hearst this past weekend. You will know, because you were there, that their real fear was, and still is, the downloading exercise and the new downloading deal your government and the AMO 16 reached.

They fear it will not be revenue-neutral in the short term or the long term. Initial number crunching by these northern municipalities shows severe shortfalls. For example, the region of Sudbury \$73 million in the hole; the city of Sault Ste Marie \$20 million short; Timmins \$12 million short.

Minister, will you guarantee today that these individual municipalities, and all municipalities in the north that find themselves in a negative position because of your downloading exercise, will be given every single dollar necessary from your government to make this revenue-neutral?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): The honourable member opposite is correct. We did have an enjoyable meeting up in Hearst on Friday afternoon. I was joined

by my colleague Mr Palladini. His question is in regard to the trade that AMO and the municipalities presented to the government of Ontario.

As you know, in January we brought the House back with a special Who Does What session. We said at that time that province-wide education, the opportunity for every student to have a quality education in this province, wasn't on the table. The province had to take that over.

We also said that the fiscal picture wasn't in question, but if there were better ideas on how this trade could take place, that was fine. We listened and responded to AMO and other municipal representatives, of which FONOM had a member at the table, Mayor Mavrinac from Kirkland Lake, and they brought forward a very sensible and practical alternative that the government agreed to.

The question northern municipalities had a problem with was the announcement prior to this on the cancellation of support grants to municipalities. Our challenge to work with AMO and to work with FONOM is to make sure —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr Bartolucci: You wonder why we get angry, Mr Speaker.

They were so concerned that they passed a resolution asking you to make sure it's revenue-neutral. They're not happy and they're still concerned. They're upset that you will not answer their questions. You didn't do it in Hearn and you refuse to do it today. Minister, your Premier and your finance minister have promised that the exchange will be revenue-neutral. In fact, they went as far as to say there's a possibility of a 10% tax cut.

Minister, will you guarantee today that property taxes in all northern Ontario municipalities will not go up next year or in subsequent years because of the downloading? If you'll give that guarantee, will you put it in writing so they have something tangible like they had in your commitment here on page 13 that you would do that? Will you do it in writing today?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'm not sure that the northern representatives would want what the member opposite is asking. They had a concern that the grants are going to be cancelled, and that was announced a couple of years ago. Of course at the end of the day there's going to be \$667 million less, and that could be equal to the amount of the grants.

Northerners don't want that. They want to be treated equitably right across the province so that as we work through this agreement, the tradeoff is fiscally neutral through the province. We want to make sure it's done equitably. One of the things they've asked us for is that they wanted the northern support —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Hold on. Minister —

Interjections.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): They especially like the 37 bucks for a licence.

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, order. Minister.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Half of the gas prices they pay in the north compared to the south. But the member of the opposition brings up a good question, that we're going to have to work with our municipal partners. I and my

colleague the Minister of Transportation and the parliamentary assistant to municipal affairs were there and we had a good meeting. They realize that it's complicated, that it's going to take cooperation between the municipal partners and the Ontario government, and we're going to work through this.

ADULT EDUCATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. There are two excellent adult education centres in my riding, the City Adult Learning Centre and the Jones Avenue Adult New Canadian School. I'm sure you've heard of them. The Jones centre will probably not survive your cuts, because it is geared to employment, it offers courses in business, computers and co-op program, and under your so-called GED program, this will all be lost to that school. CALC will be severely impacted; it will lose experienced teachers and important programs. Why are you discriminating against students in Ontario on the basis of their age?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member opposite for the question because it gives us an opportunity to once again talk about the programs that have been brought forward by this government which will help adults get an education, get training and get on with their lives in the workforce. We have several initiatives under way right now and we of course are engaged in negotiations with our federal counterparts to make sure we get the right training deal for people in Ontario.

In terms of the specific reference the member opposite made in talking about our schools, just one of the adult education and training delivery systems in the province, we continue to fund education for adults, we continue to fund based on what adult needs are. I am surprised that after all this length of time, because after all we're talking about announcements that were made almost a year and a half ago now, the member opposite would rise to her feet and ask me the difference between adolescent education and adult education once again in this chamber. I think we've addressed that question time and time again, and the people of Ontario understand that there is a difference between adults and adolescents, a difference in their needs.

Ms Churley: I'm getting really sick of hearing the same tired old answers from this minister about adult education in this province, which severely affects adults, new Canadians and high school dropouts who need to get back into the labour force. They need a commitment from you today that you will restore that funding you cut. You can stand up in this House and say repeatedly to questions from the opposition that we over here don't understand. You are cutting the funding; it is as simple as that. Adult learning centres are going to close, and people are going to be stuck with programs that research done in the United States shows kills adult schooling overall. People are not going to have the same opportunities to get jobs; there's research that shows that.

You're telling boards of education for students that the boards will have to decide whether they'll be cut or not so it's out of your hands. I want you to stand up here

today and say that you will restore that funding and make sure adults can get a good education and can get jobs in Ontario.

Applause.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I too applaud the member opposite's use of recycling. You're attempting to recycle an issue that is now a year and a half old.

When we tailored the funding for adult education in our schools to the needs of adults, when we did that a year and a half ago, you stood up and other people stood up in this chamber and said, "That's the end of adult education in Ontario." In fact, it's not. We have school boards right across the province offering education for adults that is designed for adults, delivered in a time frame that is there for the needs of adults.

We recognize, this government recognizes that there is a difference between the needs of adults and the needs of adolescents. You cannot condemn adults to an adolescent program. I've talked to people across the province about this, and most reasonable people in the province understand completely that there is a considerable difference between adolescents and adults. I find it incredible that the member opposite cannot recognize and understand that.

1440

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Could you update the House on the government's programs to offer long-term-care patients one-stop shopping?

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): You mean we had to wait for this?

Mrs Marland: I know the member for Beaches-Woodbine is concerned about these patients who need long-term care. We'd like to know how that's going to work through the new community care access centres.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I heard the member for Beaches-Woodbine interject and say, "We waited for this." The truth is, all through her government there was a whole series of programs in her riding, and she appreciated the opportunity, several weeks ago, to be present when I provided upgraded funding for several programs in her riding that deal on the basis of community-based support systems.

This government is very proud that we have created an infrastructure called community care access centres, that this is one-stop access. We waited for over a decade to have this program implemented in this province. We have taken 74 agencies and we have put those into 43 single-point access for the disabled and seniors across this province. The volunteer boards all across this province are involved with people who are seniors, members of the disabled community. These are individuals who contributed in their communities and volunteered, as I said.

Frankly, the contribution they're making to develop an accountable system in Ontario —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mrs Marland: I know there is at the moment a wide disparity in the level of services for long-term care across

the province. In the region of Peel, in spite of what the opposition is saying, we have a CCAC which is supported very much by those community agencies in the region. I would just like you to tell the House how you're going to address the problems of the imbalance across the province and how the CCACs are part of the solution.

Hon Mr Jackson: The CCACs have been working very hard to find savings. We estimate that, by this transfer, we have created savings in the magnitude of \$4 million. It's enough money in savings to purchase about 100,000 more nursing visits in this province and about 211,000 homemaking visits.

As a result, we've been able to take a system in this province which has not been based on equity funding, acknowledgement for growth, no common assessment tools — we've been able to, in as short a time as a year and a half, reconfigure this system so that we can provide equity funding in municipalities all across this province, municipalities that are represented in all sectors of this Legislature.

This a "more fairness" model. This is a model where seniors in one part of the province get the same level of service as in other parts of the province. This government is deeply committed to ensuring one-window access, more equitable financing in high-growth areas and to have more accountability with public funds.

USER FEES

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): You might as well stay up. My question is to the minister responsible for seniors affairs. Can you please tell me, tell us in the House today, how many months are there in a year for seniors who receive benefits through the Ontario drug benefit plan?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I didn't catch —

Interjections.

Mr Sergio: Can I repeat the question?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Yes, go ahead.

Mr Sergio: How many months are there in a year for seniors receiving benefits through the Ontario drug benefit plan?

Hon Mr Jackson: There is no question. First of all, as I said earlier, we have one of the most comprehensive public drug plans in North America. I must indicate, not every senior in Ontario wants to admit when their 65th birthday is in order to become eligible for this plan in the first place. I want to indicate that there are —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Jackson: This province is currently supporting 1.4 million seniors who are utilizing this drug plan, and once they are fully into the plan, they are utilizing its services for 12 months of the year.

Mr Sergio: Since July 15 of last year seniors have been paying a copayment — whatever you call it — deductible, user fee, to the tune of \$100. Through your programs they are being asked to pay another \$100 three months prior to the expiry of that year. Can you please tell me today, tell the seniors through this House, that you will see that the seniors will be compensated for

what they have paid for, which is 12 months and not nine months, in a year of benefits?

Hon Mr Jackson: I should advise all members of the House that this is not a question for people who are 67, 68 or older in this province. They understand the rules of participation of the drug plan. What the real question is is what I raised earlier in this House: that we have a \$1.2-billion drug plan in this province, the most generous on the face of the earth. In one instance alone that I'll give the member who wants information, the drug Losec in this province was approved with an expectation that it would cost \$2 million worth of taxpayers' dollars; last year alone we spent \$57 million on one drug.

I invite the member opposite to come to this Legislature with creative ways in which we can lower the cost of the drug plan without increasing costs to seniors, because I want to assure the member that every government in Canada has always resorted to increasing utilization fees, but not this government.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent so that this House can call forward the wheel separation legislation for passage today at second reading.

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane South is asking for unanimous consent to call forward the wheel separation legislation. Agreed? I heard a bunch of noes, so it's no.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 34(a), I wish to advise you of my dissatisfaction with the response of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to my question on Tuesday, May 6, regarding assistance to flood victims and his further comments today. I will file the appropriate papers.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): File at the table. Thank you.

PETITIONS

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission appointed by the health minister has recommended closure of the London and St Thomas psychiatric hospitals; and

"Whereas psychiatric patients are being displaced without adequate support systems; and

"Whereas article 34(1) of the Mental Health Act states, 'A patient shall be discharged from a psychiatric facility when he is no longer in need of the observation, care and treatment provided therein'; and

"Whereas article 34(2) of the Mental Health Act states, 'Subsection (1) does not authorize the discharge into the community of a patient who is subject to detention otherwise under this act';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to retain psychiatric facilities separate from

schedule 1 hospitals and managed by the Ministry of Health to ensure that no person will go untreated or will be placed at risk or cause another to be placed at risk."

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The campaign to save TVO is continuing and the amazing thing is that we're getting from all over the province, including Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, Cambridge —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Let's hear the petition then.

Mr Gravelle: The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I'm proud to sign my name to that petition.

1450

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

I affix my signature to this.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci which promotes smaller class sizes passed second reading; and

"Whereas this bill, known as Bill 110, was referred to the social development committee; and

"Whereas we, the stakeholders in education, want the government committee to hear what we have to say about smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas we want to hear what the government committee has to say regarding smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas all people in Ontario have a right to speak to the social development committee about smaller class sizes;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the recommendation that the social development committee travel across Ontario to find out what the students, parents, teachers and taxpayers of Ontario are saying about smaller class sizes and Bill 110, the smaller class sizes act."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): "Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of Ontario."

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000;

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services; and

"Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Minister of Health to provide appropriate levels of funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west-end community and to restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county."

This is today particularly poignant as the health restructuring commission is in Windsor today.

REGULATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I have a petition regarding the proposed Social Work Act in Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, are concerned about the exclusionary intentions of the Ontario College of Certified Social Workers to regulate the delivery of social work in Ontario. It is imperative that graduates of social service worker programs are included in the proposed Social Work Act. More than 50% of practising social workers in Ontario are graduates of community college SSW programs. Any legislation must include the regulation of social service workers and their clients in order to realistically reflect the services provided in our communities."

I will sign my signature.

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): "To the government of Ontario:

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology; and

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer services; and

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres; and

"Since the Niagara hospital restructuring committee used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommendations and was forced to take into account a cut of \$44 million in funding for Niagara hospitals when carrying out its study; and

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature to this petition as I'm in full agreement with its contents.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have a petition concerning gun control.

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking and the ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic of illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the streets and involve them in bureaucracy other than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

I'm in agreement with this petition and therefore affix my signature.

CHILD CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislature to the following:

"That managing the family home and caring for infant and preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society and deserves respect and support;

"That child care policies and funding should provide equity and fairness to all Ontario families;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislature to pursue policy and funding initiatives such as a child care tax credit that will support a full range of child care choices for the families of Ontario including direct parental care."

I agree and I affix my signature to it.

SALE OF AMMUNITION

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have a petition with respect to ammunition regulations:

"Whereas the NDP government under former Premier Bob Rae passed legislation, Bill 181, the Ammunition Regulation Act, placing restrictions on the sale of ammunition in Ontario; and

"Whereas the provisions contained in Bill 181 are time-consuming, onerous and create unnecessary red tape; and

"Whereas the records for which these provisions have been produced do not track criminals; and

"Whereas Bill 181 was passed in only one day, without any discussion with law-abiding gun owners such as farmers, collectors, hunters and recreational shooters, who understand and have a deep respect for the power of firearms and ammunition and the need to maintain and use their equipment in the safest of conditions; and

"Whereas Bill 181 will do nothing to combat the illegal use of ammunition;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal Bill 181, protect the rights of responsible firearms owners and work for tougher penalties against weapons offences."

I sign this petition.

MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition against Bill 111 which is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and deals with the amendments to the Mental Health Act regarding involuntary commitment.

"We, the undersigned consumer-survivors and their supporters, oppose the amendments to sections of the Mental Health Act. The proposed changes threaten to increase further violations and abuse of people with mental illness.

"The present act requires in part that we be of imminent harm to ourselves and others. This criterion has been expanded to include harm that may occur at some undetermined future time. In addition, we can be assessed or committed if it is 'believed' that the mental disorder will lead to physical deterioration.

"As consumer-survivors, we are able to judge, to predict and to determine our futures. We have the right to self-determination and to voluntarily choose treatment that is appropriate to our needs and oppose the changes to the Mental Health Act that address only the fears and lack of education of others."

Pursuant to the rules, I've signed it.

1500

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition signed by a number of people from North York. It reads:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence to the government in the province of Ontario."

TUITION FEES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas post-secondary educational costs have been increasing due to economic and technological changes;

"Whereas student tuition fees have increased greatly over the past few years;

"Whereas the cost of living for students continues to increase;

"Whereas students are unable to continue their education due to high costs;

"Whereas future economic growth depends on access to post-secondary education;

"Whereas the panel on the Future Directions for Postsecondary Education recognizes the inadequacy in financial resources available to post-secondary education;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to renew its financial commitment for post-secondary education and to recognize that a multi-year commitment to the restoration of support must be guaranteed."

This is signed by hundreds and sent in by Claudio Monteleone, a Lakehead University student.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition sent to me from the fine people of Longlac and Geraldton, Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence to the government in the province of Ontario."

I'm proud to sign my name to this petition.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Speaker: I rise to correct my record. A moment ago, I introduced a petition very similar to the one just read by the member for Port Arthur, and I said that it was from residents of North York. I know that this probably makes absolutely no difference to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and to the government members, but it was not from North York. It was from the city of York.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Thank you very much for that clarification.

Mr Gravelle: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: In the petition that I read previously also related to increased cost to students, I meant to say very proudly that I was very proud to sign it. I did forget to do so, and I wanted to be sure. I have since signed it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TENANT PROTECTION ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 SUR LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES

Mr Leach moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 96, An Act to Consolidate and Revise the Law with respect to Residential Tenancies / Projet de loi 96, Loi codifiant et révisant le droit de la location à usage d'habitation.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Today I move second reading of Bill 96, the Tenant Protection Act. This legislation constitutes an important new direction for Ontario. This legislation takes a seriously flawed system of rent regulation and improves it for the benefit of all tenants, property owners and taxpayers in the province.

This legislation is balanced, and balance is critical to the creation of a successful system of rent regulation. As I've said many times in all the consultations we've undertaken in the area of rent control, it quickly becomes obvious that tenants and property owners are never going to agree on rental housing. Both sides want to have it all their own way. Tenants suggest imposing the strictest controls imaginable, leaving property owners with absolutely no chance to break even, never mind making a profit. Property owners suggest eliminating the entire rent control system and all the regulations that go with it, leaving tenants totally unprotected. There was almost never a compromise position.

Yet both tenants and property owners are confronted with a system that is seriously flawed. More than \$10 billion in repairs is needed to rental buildings in Ontario. There are apartment buildings across the province with dozens of outstanding work orders for maintenance.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): So why are you increasing the property taxes?

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

Hon Mr Leach: There is little investment in rental housing, with a mere handful of new apartments being built each year. Vacancy rates in many of our cities are extremely low, leaving tenants with few choices about where to live. Clearly these are very serious problems,

and this government is committed to do something about them.

We want to achieve four things: First, we want to protect tenants from unfair rent increases and arbitrary evictions; second, we want to improve maintenance and get tough on landlords who fail to take care of their buildings; third, we want to create a climate where people will invest in new rental housing; fourth, we want to streamline administration and cut red tape to create a faster, fairer system of rent control. That's where we're headed with this legislation.

Our objective is to protect tenants while fixing the problems with the current rent control system. Under the Tenant Protection Act, tenants continue to enjoy many of the valuable protections to which they've been entitled for many years:

The new law will continue to protect tenants from unfair rent increases by keeping the annual rent control guideline. The guideline is 2.8% for this year, the lowest guideline in the entire history of rent control in Ontario.

Tenants are protected by a cap on rent increases above the guideline for capital repairs.

Tenants can only receive one rent increase each year.

Tenants must be given proper notice of a rent increase.

Tenants can apply for a rent refund for poor maintenance or a lower rent for reduced services.

Tenants can also apply to challenge illegal rent increases and illegal extra charges.

All these protections, and many others, remain in place as long as the tenant continues to live in the apartment.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Then what happens?

Hon Mr Leach: I'll tell you what happens. When the apartment becomes vacant, the property owner can negotiate a new rent with a new tenant, and when the tenant moves in, that tenant will be protected by rent control and all the protections afforded to all other tenants. What we're doing is moving from a system that protects the apartment building to a system that protects the individual.

1510

It has been suggested that property owners may take advantage of this opportunity to increase rents by evicting tenants by a number of means. Well, first of all, tenants are protected from arbitrary eviction. There are specific reasons laid out in the Landlord and Tenant Act for the eviction of a tenant. These involve serious violations of the landlord-tenant relationship. The new Tenant Protection Act continues the same protection from arbitrary eviction that tenants currently enjoy.

It has also been suggested that property owners will harass tenants to get them to move out of their units so rent can be increased. I'm not going to deny that harassment can occur in any landlord-tenant relationship, and it can occur in the system that is currently in place. If it does, an enforcement unit in my ministry takes action. The current maximum fine for a corporate landlord convicted of harassing a tenant is \$25,000; under the new Tenant Protection Act, we're going to strengthen the enforcement unit, and we've doubled the maximum fine to \$50,000. I'm not going to pretend that's a perfect solution, but it's twice as tough as the current system.

It's also been suggested that property owners will try to force tenants out of their units by refusing to do any maintenance, thereby making the premises so miserable that the tenants will have no alternative but to move out. Again there are provisions in the current rent control system which deal with poor maintenance in rental buildings. Unfortunately, as we all know, the current system isn't working very well, if it's working at all. That's obvious when you consider the number of rental buildings across the province with outstanding work orders for poor maintenance. Clearly, the current system is not ensuring good maintenance; in fact, it seems to be doing exactly the opposite.

What we've done with the Tenant Protection Act is to change the system to ensure good maintenance in a number of ways.

First, we've created a system in which property owners will have to compete for new tenants, and that's a very important change. There has not been any competition for tenants among property owners for many years, and that is a critical aspect of a healthy rental market. Under the Tenant Protection Act, when a tenant moves out of an apartment, the property owner can negotiate a new rent with the incoming tenant. Obviously, if the building is falling apart, the property owner is going to have an extremely difficult time attracting a new tenant. So to start with, we have created an incentive for property owners to do the required maintenance.

Second, we have changed the system to allow property owners to recover the money they spend on repairs. The new legislation places a 4% cap on the amount above the rent control guideline by which a tenant's rent can be increased due to capital repairs to a building. Under the current system, it is not surprising that property owners are not doing any repairs to their buildings. The current system allows the property owner to recover very little of the money spent on repairs, so the repairs are not done.

Obviously, if you've seen many of the buildings around our ridings, you would agree. The buildings have countless work orders against them and tenants are plagued by chronic poor maintenance. We're going to fix that by letting property owners recover the money they legitimately spend to repair the buildings. We're giving the property owners an incentive to do maintenance and we're giving them the means to recover the money they spend on repairs.

We're going to change the system a third way: We're going to get tough with property owners who fail to take care of their buildings.

First, we're improving the ability of municipalities to enforce their property standards bylaws. We're doubling the maximum fine for a property standards violation, such as failing to comply with a municipal work order. Under the Tenant Protection Act, the maximum fine will be \$100,000 for a repeat offence by a corporate landlord.

Second, we're speeding up the process. The Tenant Protection Act will give local property standards officers the power to issue a work order for poor maintenance immediately. They will no longer have to issue a property owner with a notice of violation first, followed later by a work order, as is the case under the current system.

We're eliminating that first step and making the system faster and more efficient.

The procedures associated with serving of work orders will also be streamlined. The Tenant Protection Act will also make it easier to recover the cost of municipal repair work carried out in emergencies and easier to recover the cost of the work carried out in those instances where the property owner fails to comply with a work order. The money involved will be recovered as part of the municipal property taxes, and this greater certainty will encourage municipal action.

I would like to point out that we've made an important change to this aspect of the proposed legislation as a result of public consultation which was held on the discussion paper *New Directions* last summer. Again, I would like to extend my appreciation to members of the standing committee on general government, which conducted public hearings in nine communities across Ontario at that time. The committee received a great deal of valuable information from the public and we have made a number of substantive changes to the proposed legislation as a result of those hearings.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Which ones, Al?

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, member for Fort York. Come to order.

Hon Mr Leach: One of those changes involves the maintenance provisions. Initially we planned to make it an offence for a property owner simply to violate a maintenance standard.

Mr Marchese: You already went through that.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, come to order.

Hon Mr Leach: Municipalities could have issued tickets on the spot, without giving the property owner any opportunity to fix the problem before facing substantial fines. As the consultation revealed, this approach would not have been fair, so we've changed the legislation to give property owners an opportunity to fix the problem before a charge is laid.

Upon identifying a property standards deficiency, the municipal property standards officer can issue a work order. If the deficiency is not fixed within the time limit, then the property owner may be charged with an offence.

Another issue we're hearing about involves condominium conversions. It has been suggested that under the Tenant Protection Act, property owners will simply convert all their rental buildings to condominiums and evict all their tenants in that way. If a property owner wants to convert a rental building to a condominium, then the tenants of that building will have the first right of refusal to purchase their apartment. Those tenants who do not wish to purchase their apartments will have lifetime tenure in their apartment for as long as they like. Let me stress that: lifetime tenure. They can remain in their apartments for as long as they choose.

Mr Wildman: They are prisoners in their own apartment.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma, come to order.

Hon Mr Leach: This too is an aspect of the legislation which came about as a result of the public consultation last summer.

Mr Wildman: This law brings in house arrest.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Hon Mr Leach: We listened to the tenants' request for lifetime tenure in case of condominium conversion and we have drafted that aspect into the proposed legislation.

Mr Wildman: House arrest.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Minister, could you take your seat for a moment. Could I ask the member for Algoma and all opposition members, or most opposition members, to come to order, please. Thank you.

Mr Wildman: Thank you, Speaker, but I think it's incumbent upon all members to —

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, member for Algoma.

Hon Mr Leach: Probably the only one who should be under house arrest is the member for Algoma.

I want to stress that as a result no tenant, not a one, will lose their home as a result of the conversion of rental buildings to condominiums.

Also, I would like to point out an additional matter which seems to have slipped the minds of some people regarding conversion to condominiums, and that is — and this applies to the member for Fort York — that while we are changing the Rental Housing Protection Act, we have made no changes whatsoever to the authority of municipalities to adopt official plan policies restricting condominium conversions. Municipalities can still discourage condominium conversions through their official plan policies that exist in the present city of Toronto if they feel a conversion is not in the best interests of their community.

Finally, we are hearing the claim that rents will skyrocket because of the Tenant Protection Act. Our studies show exactly the opposite.

1520

Mr Marchese: Which studies, Al?

Hon Mr Leach: I'm glad the member asked. The Todd report examined the impact of rent controls if rent controls were lifted completely all at once. The Todd report concluded that after an adjustment period, on average, rents would be largely the same as they are today. The study also concluded that our proposal to keep rent controls in place for sitting tenants and allow property owners to set a new rate for vacant apartments results in an adjustment period which is less dramatic and easier on tenants. Not least of all, the report concluded that the availability of low-rent units for low-income tenants would remain unchanged.

All of this is not surprising, given the analysis of Ontario's rental housing market by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. In its study last fall, CMHC concluded that many property owners in Ontario are not charging tenants the maximum rent for their apartments; they're charging them less. Why has this happened? It's happened because the property owners cannot find tenants who are willing to pay the maximum legal rents allowed by rent control. CMHC also concludes that the demand for rental housing in Toronto will drop between now and the year 2001. The bottom line is that the market is setting rent right now, not rent controls.

In summary, the Tenant Protection Act is legislation that continues to protect tenants while solving problems with the current flawed system. This legislation will cut red tape, improve maintenance, help to encourage investment in rental housing and give the taxpayer a workable system at reasonable cost.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Gerretsen: It's difficult to know exactly where to start on this, but let me just start with the last point the minister made. He stated that his study clearly indicated that rents are going to be largely the same today as they have been over the last little while and that they will remain the same for the next four or five years. If that's so, why change the law? I think in Ontario we've probably had about 20 different rent control systems over the last 20 years, and changing the law every time certainly doesn't lead to any kind of tenant confidence in the system.

The other thing I think ought to be stated is that to call this the Tenant Protection Act when in effect you're opening up the system so that you allow landlords to increase rents a lot more often or to deregulate a unit once a tenant leaves there I think is a total misnomer. At least call it the Landlord and Tenant Act or something to that effect and don't just call it the Tenant Protection Act.

The minister makes a great to-do over the fact that the maximum fine for tenant harassment is going to go up from \$25,000 to \$50,000 if a corporate landlord gets convicted. Let's not forget that under the existing law it's my understanding that no landlord has ever been convicted on this and the maximum fine has never been imposed. If you're going from \$25,000 to \$50,000, it really doesn't make any sense at all.

The final point I very quickly want to make is that most municipalities are quite adequately equipped to issue tickets against substandard properties. They certainly don't need the pressure of the province against them in this particular case in order to speed that process along. They can handle it. Leave it alone to them. You don't need to interfere in that matter at all.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): What we need to keep in mind when it comes to this legislation is a very simple thing: What the government and the Minister of Housing are indulging in are the politics of special interests. Whose special interests, I ask? It's the special interests of developers and large landlords; not the mom-and-pop operations, but those like Cadillac Fairview and a whole bunch of other large corporations that have rental interests in this province and who say, "We want to line our pockets with larger rents so that we can make more profits and we can make a lot more money at the expense of" — who? At the expense of the tenants of the province of Ontario.

Let's be clear about what this government is up to. Will this legislation create more housing? "Oh," the government argues, "of course it will." Tell me, Minister, how is it that when you build a brand-new apartment building today in the Ontario, there is no rent control applied for five years? They can set their rent to whatever they want to make it. There is no rent control on brand-new apartment buildings in this province as it is now; there isn't for five years. That's something we put in

place, as the New Democratic government, because we understood that the market had to set the rent. But once the market has set that rent, you need to bring it under some form of rent control.

If the legislation is not going to create new housing — we know that is a fact, because there is no rent control when it comes to new housing in Ontario — then why is the government doing it? I come back to my first point. It comes down to a very simple premise. It is because the government of Ontario is playing special interest politics with the big developers and the big renters of this province. I say shame on the government, when the government decides they're more concerned about making sure that their large corporate friends can make much more money at the expense of the tenants in the province. I say shame to the Minister of Housing, and I say shame to the government. We know what side you're on; I know what side I'm on. We in the New Democratic Party are on the side of the tenants, pure and simple.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I know that none of the Conservative candidates in my area went from apartment building to apartment building saying the government was going to be ending rent control. Many of the senior citizens who are in those apartments, and some of them voted for the Conservative Party last time, are going to wonder why now they're finding out that the Conservative Party is going to end rent control, that they're coming down on the side of the huge landlords and these huge complexes and not on the side of tenants, particularly those who are on fixed incomes.

I expected this afternoon we'd be dealing with the truck safety bill, because that's supposed to be a high priority. Instead, the government seems to be anxious to end rent control in this province.

I know as well that people are going to be concerned about the fact that if they live in rental units they can be converted very easily now to condominiums. So we're going to see less and less rental accommodation as the rental accommodation in this province is easily converted to condominium. While in some cases when you're building new ones and they're condominiums, everybody knows they're moving into it, that's quite acceptable. These conversions are worrying people in the apartment in various municipalities in Ontario.

People are going to be virtual prisoners in their own apartments, because the only way they can dodge rent control, I say to my friend from Stormont, is to remain in the apartment they're in at the present time. That's why I say they're prisoners in that apartment: They would like to be able to move to other places. Those people are going to feel betrayed by the Conservative Party. They're finding out when it comes down to it, just as in health care, the Conservative Party, on this issue of rent control will come down on the side of the most wealthy, the most privileged and the most powerful people in this province. This bill is just proof of that.

Mr Marchese: I'm glad to have this two-minute opportunity to respond to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, one of the most beleaguered ministers in this House. In the last two years this poor minister has had to deal with more bills than I can think of. I feel sorry for him. I'm sure most of the members on this side

and of his own caucus feel sorry for M. Leach; I certainly do.

I will have an opportunity to exfoliate this malodorous act in the next little while, because I'll have an hour and a half, so I will leave that for that time. But in the meantime, to respond to the Minister of Culture, who talked about special-interest groups and was saying, "Special-interest groups" — Minister of Citizenship, I'm addressing these comments to you, because you were asking how we could speak of special interests. We represent the most powerless people in society, because that's what social democrats are all about. It is true that we represent a lot of interest groups, but they are powerless in this society, and in this particular case it happens to be tenants.

1530

The special-interest group the Minister of Citizenship and the Minister of Municipal Affairs are supporting is their powerful friends. Voilà la différence, Madame la Ministre. The difference is that you support the rich and the wealthy citizens of Ontario — she's trying not to pay attention, but I know she is listening to me — whereas we represent the powerless and the vulnerable. In this case today, we are talking about representing the 33% of the population who are tenants. These are the people who will be most affected by this law, a law that will hurt those people who are on low income, people with disabilities and seniors who are on low income. They'll fight back, I know it.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Minister, you can sum up.

Hon Mr Leach: I would like to thank my colleagues from across the floor: the members for Kingston and The Islands, Cochrane South, St Catharines, my good friend, and the member for Fort York.

First of all, I think we have to agree that the current system doesn't work. I know the Liberal Party was planning to bring in major changes to the rent control system. In the red book it was pointed out very clearly that the existing system doesn't work. I think the NDP would agree that the existing system needs some changes and corrections. The current system doesn't work; it doesn't work for tenants and it doesn't work for property owners.

What are we going to do with this act? The Tenant Protection Act will (1) protect tenants from unfair rent increases and arbitrary evictions; (2) it's going to get tough on landlords who fail to maintain their buildings; and (3) help produce a climate where people will invest in real estate.

What we need are more rental units being constructed. Under the current system, there haven't been any built in the last decade. I think that itself points out that the current system doesn't work. If people made all the profits that my friends opposite indicate, people would be rushing out to build apartment buildings to make these massive profits you keep talking about. Why aren't they doing that? Because it's not true.

What we're going to do is cut the red tape and create a faster, fairer system; a system that, as I said, will protect tenants. As long as they want to remain in that apartment, they will be under rent control. They can negotiate a new rent with a new landlord and then come

under rent control. This is going to be the best of situations for both landlords and tenants.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): It's my intention to share my 90 minutes with the members for Scarborough North and York South.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Duncan: The Tenant Protection Act: The title in itself suggests that this bill is yet another example of a government that's intent on false rhetoric and has no intention whatsoever of protecting tenants. This government has systematically undone the protections that have been built up over years.

Yes, Minister, our party did advocate change, but we said explicitly then and we say explicitly now that rent control has to stay. To be perfectly clear about it, when we defeat you in 1999, we will repeal this bill and reintroduce a system of rent control that will protect the tenants of this province and not abandon them to a market that can't protect their interests.

The minister has stated a case for four things he wanted to do with the bill. I'd like to, in the course of my remarks, address those four issues: He said (1) they want to protect tenants; he said (2) that the government wants to improve maintenance; he said (3) that the government wants to improve the investment climate; and then (4) he said that the government wants to streamline the administration and red tape around rent control legislation in this province.

I'd like to begin my talk by quoting the minister himself, who on a number of occasions has said — to the Ontario Home Builders' Association in October 1995 — that rent control has got to go. That's the Minister of Housing, who today stands and says that we are protecting rent control. I say the minister's credibility, like that of his colleague the Minister of Transportation, is coming off the rails. The only wheel that's flying in here is the wheel of inconsistency in a government that recognized that the position it put forward early in its mandate has now changed its tune, or at least is trying to suggest it's changing its tune.

We have the scenario of a minister who on October 19 says, "I've said it before and I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go." That's the minister who moments ago stood in this House and suggested to this House and to the people of this province that indeed he is protecting tenants in this province. "I've said it before and I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go."

When we talk of the government's credibility, is it any wonder when the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism said in the last election that he'll protect rent control that he has failed miserably? The government in its campaign brochures in the by-election last year in York South said, "Rent control will continue." But then again, Minister Al Leach, to no other than the Ontario Home Builders' Association: "Rent control has got to go."

This bill is the tenant rejection act, not the Tenant Protection Act. The bill does absolutely nothing to strengthen rent control; indeed the bill provides for the slow death of rent control in this province specifically at the time when we need rent control.

The government talks about special interests and interest group politics. Here, in our view, is a case of a government giving everything to one very small interest group, forsaking the interests of tens of thousands of Ontarians. Again, we ought not to be surprised, because it was this minister who said, "I've said it before and I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go."

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I heard it many times.

Mr Duncan: I've heard that, we've all heard it.

I'd like to take a moment to remind the government members, the members from Metro Toronto who have a lot of tenants, that there are approximately 1.4 million rental units in Ontario today; 45% of those are here in Toronto, 10% in Ottawa and the rest are spread throughout the province; 80% of those units are private and the balance are either non-profit or in government hands; over 50% of the citizens of the city of Toronto, the households in Toronto, are tenants.

I think the most salient statistic that the government has obviously chosen to ignore is that over one third of renters pay more than 30% of their income. What does that mean? It doesn't mean a lot to the government and its wealthy benefactors, it doesn't mean a lot to those people who have a comfortable lifestyle, who have been relatively blessed. But let me tell you, for people on a limited income, for people on a fixed income, 30% of their income represents an astronomically high percentage of their income, and this bill doesn't speak to their needs. This bill speaks to the needs of a government that wants to fulfil a promise. "I've said it before and I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go."

1540

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): How many more times?

Mr Duncan: We will say it again and again and again, to the member from Durham, and we'll say it in the campaign, and just to be unequivocal, as we said in the last election, when we beat you in 1999, we'll repeal this bill and reintroduce meaningful rent control legislation in Ontario because you are abandoning once again the people who need the protection of government the most.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Just like you did with the GST, right? Just like you got rid of the GST. You guys have no credibility at all.

Mr O'Toole: What does Sheila say?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Durham East, come to order. Attorney General, come to order.

Mr Duncan: You are abandoning the poor. You are abandoning those in our society who spend more than 30% of their income. You're ignoring the market, I say to the minister. You are not providing for tenant protection. You are providing for a free market that will penalize the poorest in this society and you are providing a piece of legislation that does nothing that the minister said it would do. Again, I remind you, this government, this minister, said on October 19 to the Ontario Home —

Hon Mr Harnick: What did the red book say?

Mr Duncan: It's page 28. It says, "We will protect rent control," and we will do it. We owe no apology to you or yours. Page 28, bottom of the page. We stand

behind that and we'll scrap this bill and we will bring forward meaningful tenant protection legislation when we beat you in 1999.

Maintenance: The minister says that they want to improve maintenance in these buildings. He says the protections are in there. We've gone through this with a fine-tooth comb and what we see is unenforceable law with fines that mean nothing and won't be enforced, similar to the fines that the minister has brought forward in the occupational health and safety domain. We say that this does nothing to improve maintenance of apartments and that the government had no intention whatsoever of protecting tenants.

The provincial vacancy rate today is approximately 2.4%; Toronto's is 1%. That represents a tight market. The government claims this bill will stimulate development of apartment units. We say, wrong again. Investment dollars are not competing against the guidelines. Investment dollars are competing against a whole variety of other opportunities. It's our view that if the government's intention is to create more investment in housing, it's not going to happen.

The government again has a real credibility problem in the whole issue of housing and the provision of housing. Let's just review some of the government's initiatives to date in the area of housing.

Staffing: They have cut 21%, total staff cuts, 398 jobs out of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing since 1994-95. They have cut \$27 million from the operating budget of that ministry — that's 11% of the Ontario Housing Corp's operating budget — and 26% of the \$51-million capital budget was cut for this year. The corporation's capital repairs budget was cut by \$13 million, or 25%. They had better hope this bill will stimulate private sector investment because they are abandoning housing as a government entity.

What does that mean? We submit that it means we will return to a climate where the most vulnerable people are exposed. The government suggests that they are protected: "Well, you know, rent control doesn't go off until they move." Let me tell you, with the rate of turnover in apartments in our large urban cores, we figure it'll be roughly four to five years before it has gone completely, certainly gone completely in those parts of Ontario where the protection is most needed.

Public housing operating subsidies have been cut by 12%, or \$16.9 million; the rent review budget was cut by 31%, or \$7.5 million; 100 rent review staff were laid off; field operations support was cut by 46%, or \$8.4 million; rent-gear-to-income financial support to subsidize the rents of low-income tenants in private housing was reduced by 10%, or \$8.4 million, in 1996. The government has also announced that all rent-gear-to-income agreements with private sector landlords will be terminated at the end of the individual agreement terms.

I remind you again: The same minister who said, "I've said it before and I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go," stands in the House and says this bill protects rent control — no credibility, none whatsoever.

The government has been very clear. They have wanted to end rent control. The minister was right when he first said that and that's what this bill does. They

download social housing on to municipalities and increase property taxes. The members opposite talk about tax and spend. You're raising property taxes in this province; it will be the Harris property tax increase that will go into effect next year.

If you were as serious as you say about expenditure control, we suggested last week, we've said it for the last two years, and we'll say it again: Give up the tax cut. Wait until you've balanced the budget, until you don't have to borrow the \$5.5 billion per year to finance the tax cut. You have not created jobs. You have not kept pace with other provinces. You have, in our view, failed miserably in your economic policy, and this is yet another attempt to undermine law that was developed in this province over a number of years. It has been modified and changed and subject to lengthy debate.

This bill, members know, will replace six pieces of legislation. It will amend others. Groups were heard all last summer. They made excellent presentations. Members of all parties sat through those hearings, and we look forward to going forward again. We look forward to public hearings this summer, especially here in Toronto and Ottawa and Windsor and Hamilton and other areas where this draconian legislation will have a huge impact.

You were told clearly by groups ranging from the Coalition to Save Tenants' Rights, the Ottawa-Carleton Federation of Tenants, the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, the seniors' groups, including the United Seniors of Ontario, that you ought not to proceed with this kind of legislation, and yet you march on. You are creating a potential crisis in housing in this province the likes of which haven't been seen since the mid-1970s. Landlords will be given free rein. The application of these laws, in our view, will not create any new housing, will not improve the status of maintenance, and will not improve the investment climate in housing in this province.

The minister has argued in the House today that other provisions in the bill will prevent landlords from forcing tenants to leave. We say that won't work. It's in the landlord's interest to have as many new tenants as possible. It's in the landlord's interest to try and get somebody out of a rent-controlled unit now so that unit is no longer under rent control.

1550

You're proposing the creation of an anti-harassment unit in the ministry and a doubling of the fines: \$10,000 for individual landlords and \$50,000 for corporations. Those fines will never, ever be implemented. I hope the case backlog you create immediately in this new agency isn't like the backlog we've witnessed in other government agencies. Government agencies cannot deal with the type of volume you will be creating. Vacancy decontrol means the slow death of rent control. It will lead to landlord intimidation and higher rents right across the housing market, and the people who will pay the most are the poorest and most vulnerable among us.

It's interesting, almost ironic, that the government has said or acknowledges that the climate they are creating is a climate that in fact will lead to landlord harassment. If the government didn't believe that, why would they create this agency, this anti-harassment unit, and put in

the fines? The government is now acknowledging that they're creating a climate for tenant harassment, and they are attempting to deal with that climate with a body that simply won't work.

We believe tenants also need the assurance of a maximum rent cap. We hope tenants, and landlords, will be better served by the tribunal the government has proposed to create; we don't believe they will be.

The climate of investment in our major housing markets in Ontario has been the subject of much debate since rent control was first introduced in this Legislature by a previous Conservative government in 1975. There has long been an argument that rent controls lead to no investment or disinvestment in rental housing. The economics are such, the vacancy rates are such that we have been able to absorb. Yes, there have been problems, and yes, in our view, there have been problems with the administration of rent control legislation and other tenant-landlord legislation in this province, but it is our view that the government is not solving a problem, that indeed it's creating a problem.

In 1986, in Bill 51, there were amendments by the previous Liberal government. My colleague the member for Scarborough North carried that initiative. The previous NDP government brought forward amendments and changes. Throughout the history of rent controls we have changed the system, we have adjusted the system, and those changes and adjustments have been subject to great public debate, but never has there been an all-out attack on rent control as we see today.

I remind you that this minister said to the Ontario Home Builders' Association on October 19, 1995, "I've said it before and I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go." When the minister says he is protecting rent control, we know differently. We know by the minister's own words that he had no intention of protecting rent control. We've watched the government back and forth on this issue, one minister saying one thing, another minister saying another thing, and now we see the final product.

It's an interesting piece of legislation. It's far-reaching in its scope, attempts to deal with some administrative matters, we hope, but fundamentally on every major issue, in our view, it takes the side of landlords and developers over tenants and the poor.

We would rather see legislation that protects rent control, that recognizes that the last 22 years have not been a waste, because they haven't been. In markets like Toronto and others, even in a low-inflation environment like this — and we acknowledge that when rent controls were first brought in, we had a high-inflation environment — tenants need protection. With 30% of your income going for housing, even a 1% increase impacts on every other element of a life.

If you went to your bank and said, "I want to spend 30% of my gross income on a mortgage," the bank would look twice, because they know that's high.

Interjection.

Mr Duncan: If you went into a market and had to face 2% or 3% or 4% increases on any part of the basket of life goods we look at, that's a large increase, especially when it eats up a large portion of your income.

There is a need to protect tenants and there is a need to deal meaningfully with tenant law and rent control law in Ontario.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I guess I blew that one.

Mr Duncan: No, the member never blows anything, with all due respect. We may not agree on all issues, but his input is always welcome.

I want to take a moment to speak about section 200 of the bill. The minister will be aware that that is the section of the bill that amends the Human Rights Code. We're now in possession of a letter from the Tory-appointed chair of that commission, the Honourable Keith Norton — the members opposite will remember Mr Norton; he was a distinguished minister in a previous Conservative government — asking the government to repeal section 200 of the bill. Why? Because it contradicts the human rights legislation in this province. That's what he says. He says you'll have on the one hand the Human Rights Code trying to protect tenant rights, and on the other hand you'll have this section of this law trying to undermine them. I say to the minister, if he's wrong, tell us he's wrong and say why.

Let me quote the long letter:

"It should be borne in mind that the code's protection against discrimination on the grounds of public assistance...is limited to the social area of accommodation (such as rented housing). Therefore, regulations that purport to allow the use of tenant screening based on income information will effectively authorize discrimination against people on public assistance. This will wipe out the protection provided by the code, on the ground of public assistance, for all practical purposes. In short, the government will have granted the right to equal treatment on the ground of receipt of public assistance with one hand and will take it away with the other."

The minister is shaking his head no, no, no. Well, Minister, this is your appointment. The Ontario Human Rights Commission in a letter dated March 10; it's on their letterhead, to you. It brings into question precisely what the government is about.

The government is about removing protection from those who most need protection, whether it be in welfare assistance, whether it be in tenant protection, whether it be in labour law. This is yet another spoke in the wheel.

Interjection.

Mr Duncan: The minister disagrees with the chair of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and I respect that, but the commission is very clear and cites a number of legal references.

Again I'll remind you that this is a minister who today stands in the House and says that this bill protects tenants' rights, but on October 19, 1995, he said to the Ontario Home Builders' Association: "I've said it before and I'll say it again. Rent control has got to go."

1600

We are left with a situation where we have a minister saying one thing and doing another, but we shouldn't be surprised, because this government said it wouldn't close hospitals. We remember the Premier of Ontario in a televised debate: "I will not close hospitals." What have they done? In Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Sudbury, Windsor,

Toronto, London, Hamilton, and coming soon to a town near you, hospitals are closing.

This is a government that says it will preserve rent control, but the minister speaks a different game when he's talking to the Ontario home builders. We heard from the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism in the last election that they would keep rent control; they haven't done it.

Hon Mr Leach: Sure we have.

Mr Duncan: The minister says, "Sure we have." It's just like in January when the minister stood in this House and said the downloading was revenue-neutral to municipalities. We saw the spectacle of the minister standing again in March changing almost everything they did and backtracking. Why? Because they had in fact downloaded \$1.6 billion in new costs to municipalities. They will be remembered as the government and the minister who increased property taxes for everyone in Ontario. When is a tax cut not a tax cut? Like the one we've seen in Ontario. It's a shell game, it's not a tax cut. They're downloading and downloading. There are still going to be net new costs to municipalities in excess of \$600 million, dollars that will have to be paid by property taxpayers.

We have a government yet again today saying, "We're protecting rent control," yet the minister who introduced the bill said on October 19, 1995: "I've said it before and I'll say it again. Rent control has got to go." Those were the minister's words, not mine. Those were said to an organization that has long advocated this.

We say to the government, at least be consistent. The rhetoric before the election came fast and furious. Even after the election, the minister who stands today saying that his bill protects tenants has said unequivocally, "Rent control has got to go."

Hon Mr Leach: What have you got against landlords?

Mr Duncan: We have nothing against landlords. We think landlords should earn a fair rate of return, but we've got a lot in common with tenants who are exposed to unfair rent increases, particularly those tenants whose incomes are eaten up by their housing costs. In cities like Toronto, housing costs for most tenants eat up up to 30% of their income. It's a very fundamental and clear issue of debate: Should they be protected? They're not protected.

I challenge the minister to release figures of when he estimates that all units in Toronto and Ontario today will be off rent control. We think it'll be about five or six years by the time this whole thing has worked its way through the system. When you look at turnover rates in cities like Toronto and Windsor and Hamilton and other major centres where there are low vacancy rates, they will lose rent control when somebody moves. It's killing rent control slowly.

The minister said, and I quote again: "I've said it before and I'll say it again. Rent control has got to go." He was right: Rent control is going to go under this plan. There is absolutely no question about that.

We've seen this kind of rhetoric in education. A government that wants to improve education cuts education. Our universities are the poorest-funded in Canada. We say invest in education, invest in health care and give up the tax cut until we've balanced the books. Be respon-

sible. Don't finance a tax cut. The government says it's going to create jobs. The government's wrong again. They had one good month so far. They're about 250,000 off the mark they predicted in their own Common Sense Revolution. We believe there is room for improvement and we will support anything that improves the administration.

Interjection.

Mr Duncan: Yes, Minister, there are lots of situations where people have invested their life's savings in rental situations, but that doesn't mean you abandon tenants across the province. That doesn't mean you treat those landlords like you treat a big multinational that's traded on the TSE. That's the problem with this bill. That's the problem with the government's attitude. It treats them all the same and they're not the same, just like all tenants aren't the same.

We say take back the bill and bring in real rent control or amend the existing statutes, but don't stand here and tell us that you're protecting rent control, because it was you, Minister, and not us who said, "I said it before, I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go."

We see the government's credibility issue just today. For four months we have had the story about the need to deal with truck safety legislation and for four months the opposition has been saying: "Bring it forward. We'll pass it in a day." Then Friday came along and the Premier said, "Oh, it's too draconian," so everything that had been said up until now must be wrong.

There's a pattern emerging. Just as you call this the Tenant Protection Act, it's not; it's the tenant rejection act. It flows from the government's and the minister's thinking: "I said it before, I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go." When we're before the Ontario Home Builders' Association, it's one thing, and when we're in the Legislature in front of the cameras, it's another. I would submit that the government, other than a few of the members from downtown Toronto, has been pretty clear historically: They have no place for rent control, they really don't believe in it and this bill removes rent control.

Hon Mr Leach: I'm a member from downtown Toronto.

Mr Duncan: That's right. You've been left in an awful position and we do sympathize. As my House leader said, you have had carriage of some pretty tough legislation. The minister has had to do some pretty tough things. We watched in January as he struggled with the disentanglement exercise, an exercise he has now abandoned, an exercise he is now saying was wrong. So when the minister says that this will protect tenants, even if he believes it, and I think he does believe it, he just can't be believed.

In January this minister told us unequivocally that the changes the government announced in mega-week were revenue-neutral. Then we spent two and a half months extricating ourselves from that and making a deal with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, a deal which still leaves them vulnerable to tax increases. There are a lot of municipalities out there that don't support the agreement. There are a lot of municipalities out there that are shocked at what AMO's agreed to, and we will take

their fight to this House because we know what you're doing: You're forcing down costs so that your books can look good, and you're going to force an increase in property taxes.

When the minister says this bill will protect tenants and rent control, he's no more correct than he was when he said that the downloading exercise in January, the mega-week announcements, were revenue-neutral. He just isn't. Again I remind you of the minister's words to the Ontario Home Builders' Association: "I said it before, I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go."

Minister, we welcome the opportunity to have public hearings this summer on this bill. We know you've agreed to them and we hope you'll attend. We hope you'll come with us as we travel and discuss every section of this far-reaching bill. One certainly can't argue that it's not far-reaching, because it is. It restructures landlord and tenant law in this province.

One of the minister's four objectives is to streamline administration. We truly hope there is some of that. We think there's been an attempt in some parts of the bill to achieve that. But fundamentally this bill betrays the truth that the government does not believe in rent control, that the government is prepared to sell out the interests of tenants in the interests of big landlords.

We don't believe for one minute, nor should you, that this will stimulate investment in private rental accommodation in Toronto or any of the other major centres in this province. We think the bill is wrongheaded. We think it reflects what the minister said on October 19, 1995, the now Minister of Housing who today tells us he's protecting tenant rights. He said, and I'll quote, "I said it before, I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go."

1610

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I want to commend my colleague from Windsor-Walkerville for starting to remind the members opposite of some of their responsibilities. This is a reprehensible bill which had found its way to the shelf and is now back. This is a bill which shows the true character of a government that can say one thing during an election, the same thing during by-elections, and then bring back to this House legislation, purported laws, to directly contravene the covenant they made with those prospective voters.

In my by-election one year ago this government said, "Mike Harris's tenant protection plan will guarantee rent control and will lower rents." Ladies and gentlemen, today we have in front of us the next stage of legislation that will have exactly the opposite effect. We have a minister opposite, who represents a large number of tenants, who told them the same thing in his election and brings in here an attack on tenants of a kind we haven't seen in the history of the province.

I think everyone in this House recognizes that rent controls originated with a Conservative government, but a Conservative government with a difference, a Conservative government that cared about its reputation for integrity, a Conservative government that could be depended on to listen to a wider band of people, to include the people who couldn't pay their way in their fund-raisers, to put them somewhere on their place of consideration.

What is the situation today for rental property in the province and particularly in Metro Toronto? We know that according to the Russell Canadian property index in the July 2 issue of the Toronto Star there's been a 10% average return for rental property, the highest of any commercial property in the province. That's where the landlords are coming from. That's what they have available to them; not all landlords, but that is the average.

What do we have for tenants? For tenants in this province we have rents which are 40% more than other centres across the country; 40% more than Montreal or Winnipeg; 50% more than Edmonton; rents which are completely out of proportion to what most people can pay.

This is not only an issue of protecting the disadvantaged, this is not only an issue of the very thin veneer of pretend integrity on the part of this government, this is not only even an issue of who this government listens to; this is an issue about the quality of life for Ontarians. You don't have to live in an apartment to recognize what happens when honest, hardworking people have to pay so much of their income for rent and when that has to be done simply because we don't have a government willing to recognize when there needs to be a level playing field.

As the member opposite from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who played lacrosse, perhaps recognizes, in some games there's got to be a referee. Ever since 1974 we've had the government playing referee between landlords and tenants because of an inequitable situation. That situation has not changed in the sense of tenants still being disadvantaged, of landlords still being able to get fair returns, but for some unfathomable reason, for reasons that are not here in the House before us today, for reasons that were not part of the Comic Book Revolution, for reasons that were not part of the by-election that was fought on rent controls, for none of those reasons, we have this legislation back today directly contradicting what this government purported to stand for.

We see instead a situation that will inevitably and that we would respect better, I think — I'm afraid my colleague the member for Windsor-Walkerville is perhaps a tad too generous. We would respect better a minister who stood up and said: "I believe it's important to raise the rents. I think it's important to give landlords a better return."

The minister can't explain this bill. The minister can't explain how this is going to protect tenants. I asked him on several occasions when I was critic. Not one instance could he give where this bill actually improves protection for tenants from the existing situation. This is a bill that enhances in every aspect the situation for landlords, and ironically in some ways that various landlords in this province don't even want, instead of having a situation where the government recognizes its honourable role as a referee and gets at the real situation, the problematic parts of why rent is so high, about the cost of land, about the inequitable part of taxes that we have seen go through this House in terms of Bill 106, and nothing about trying to change the burden of taxes that exist on the people who rent versus those who own. That's not courage for this government. They didn't see that in their mandate. They didn't see that as a way to be able to deliver for

tenants, for the people who need some relief from the high rents they're paying.

We're left with the question of who is to benefit from this. If it wasn't in the election platform, if it directly contradicts what this minister said when he was running for election, if it directly contradicts what the Premier authorized to be said in his name during the by-election in York South, who does this benefit, who can turn this government to making these kinds of decisions? It seems clear. The only people who could possibly benefit are larger landlords.

We had, through the hearings last summer, all kinds of smaller landlords in front of us. Those landlords were interested in improvements, particularly in terms of being able to get rid of problem tenants. That was their singular preoccupation. But they agreed one after another that rent controls were not the issue, that rent controls were not the reason they wanted to see the legislation changed. To them, rent controls represented fair rules, predictable rules, a predictable return on investment which is often not available in other parts of commercial endeavour.

What we have instead is a narrow band of people who want to benefit from this bill. It's unfortunate that the public interest should be so badly sacrificed, that we should see a government prepared to contradict itself, to contradict so many people. Again, the quality of life here is for everyone; it's not just for a small band of people. Everyone who lives in our major centres is paying too much for housing. Everyone who is subject to rent controls needs it to keep a semblance of fairness in terms of what they're going to be able to pay for their rent.

When we have the minister unable to identify what this will do for tenants, we recognize there's a fundamental flaw in this bill, and the minister knows. If he had to answer a direct question, I think he would have to agree that rents will go up when rent controls are gone in our apartments, and the landlord will be able to claim whatever he wants; in a 0.8% vacancy rate here in Toronto, a 2% vacancy rate which exists in Hamilton and Windsor, the rents will increase. They're not fooling anybody. Those rents will go up.

I see the concerned look on the face of the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. That's right. They will go up for the members of your riding. I think it's important to know that even without the time when you move, it will still go up by more. Even in these low inflationary times, this minister and this government have seen fit to return a higher amount of money to landlords, so the amount for capital repairs is increased. The money for operating costs like taxes and other utility costs is flowed through, so that the amount of increase tenants could face is far higher than it is now. That exposure is there for every single tenant in the province.

I ask the minister again, where is the increased protection for tenants that you promised during the election? Where is it? What provisions? It doesn't exist. We see again the very extreme prospect that people are facing. We know there are many tenants out there who believe they are secure in their buildings, they live in well-maintained buildings, they have good landlords, yet they now recognize that the absolute elimination of the Rental Housing Protection Act is going to mean they're subject

to having their good home — it's nothing less than a home; for people who live in apartments, that's what it is; for seniors who have lived in a place for 20 or 30 years — that home can be taken out from under them.

1620

The minister talked earlier about some level of protection, but as long as there's any substantive change or renovation to that apartment, the only protection they have is three months' rent and they're gone from their home. Members of the Legislature, that surely is not what we're here for: to see people taken away from their safe and in some cases — not enough cases — affordable homes. Yet that's the legislation you're putting in front of us, inadequate protection for anyone who is living in a rental situation anywhere in the province.

Of course, while this is a quality-of-life issue, this is a defining issue for this government. When we talk about the basics that people look for you to regulate, to play the role of fairminded referee, if you're unable to do that in critical areas, like opportunity for people — we've heard from the member for Windsor-Walkerville how that has been such a thunderous disappointment on the part of this government. We know there are other areas where people are having a hard time getting by, occasioned by this government; this is not unlinked.

To a government that wants to judge itself, that wants to put itself in terms of some kind of ability to look in the mirror in the morning and say, "This is what we're doing to the province," they have to bring up now what they did to the poorest people of the province, what you did to people on welfare, to people who have to pay some 60% and 70% of their income for rent. You took away 22% of their income — to think that you did that full knowing that you were going to subject them to free markets rents, that you were going to subject them to higher rents.

There are people today who routinely spend the last week of the month going without food to pay for their rent. There are people in this province who have been given the impossible choice between too high a rent and being able to feed themselves and their children. This is a government for whom, unfortunately, that is not a significant statistic; the 150,000 people in Toronto who are forced to use food banks, who receive edible rent supplements, are not a statistic that moves this government. They were able somehow in some way to rationalize taking away 22% of the income from the people who are documented — people may not realize that some 22 documents are required to be on social assistance — seeing that taken away.

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Welfare rates are 10% over the national average.

Mr Kennedy: The member across says something about having welfare rates 10% above the national average. That would be the same member, I assume, who voted in cabinet to see the rates cut, recognizing that rents here are 40% higher and that no one in this city, no one in this province, would disagree with people having welfare rates that were 10% above the national average if they could afford the rents, if they could pay for them.

What you're doing, Madam Minister, in supporting your colleague, is making it even more difficult for the 500,000 children, for the 1.1 million people on social assistance, because you're creating the situation out there.

Hon Mr Leach: There are no taxes in the apartment —

Mr Kennedy: The minister is starting to make some noise. He has inadequately addressed the problem from the Human Rights Commission. A very, very serious addition in this particular legislation is where this minister is striking —

Hon Mr Leach: What do you say about property taxes? It's four times the amount of —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Minister.

Mr Kennedy: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I can see where it would be upsetting to this minister, because this minister is striking from the Human Rights Code the potential for protection from discrimination based on income for tenants.

I can tell you, Minister, in case you have delusions, some 25% of the people who use food banks were discriminated against because of their income. You've just consigned them to where they can no longer have any dependence upon the protections that should be available to them. You were aware, I believe, of the long-standing inquiry by the Human Rights Commission which was examining this very issue, and you moved in this legislation to enhance the existing unfairness by making that attainment impossible, of declaring it unfair that tenants shouldn't be discriminated against in that fashion.

Unfortunately, it doesn't speak well for the character of how we should receive this bill, because when we try to look at this bill and try to understand how this minister and how this government see the public interest, it's made only too clear by that particular provision. Rather than having access to human rights for the same people who need the benefit of rent control, it has been summarily taken away, should this bill be passed.

I don't believe that's the sense of fairness that's enjoyed across this province. I don't think that's the way people want to see people treated, in such a cavalier fashion. I don't believe that people in this province want to see housing subject to this kind of erratic planning. We will see ahead of us years of increases, years of disruption for the people who are currently in rental accommodation. We will see a playing field tilted now between landlords and tenants. As my colleague the member for Windsor-Walkerville and our critic for housing has said, we will not let this legislation stand. The next government will not let this legislation stand, should it be a Liberal government.

Interjection.

Mr Kennedy: We hear the minister, with what some might say is typical pronouncement, saying that he believes he'll be the government again. This is not the kind of legislation that is going to bring you back to government. Perhaps your openness on being re-elected might convince you at this late date to re-examine what you're doing to the tenants of this province, because really there is no possible conception in here in which you are protecting the interests of tenants.

We look at the way in which this government put this particular legislation together. They did a report called the Lampert report which didn't talk to a single tenant, not one, which spoke only to landlords and used data assembled by large landlords, only the kind of landlords who can pay to have those kinds of consultant reports done. That's who this government decided to listen to. That's only who this government will listen to.

I sat in on the hearings that took place in August and we heard from Peterborough to Hamilton, all around the province. We understand the report finished up with not one suggestion from tenants around this province, and from small landlords, I would add, and a number of landlords not in favour of this legislation — we didn't hear one of those suggestions incorporated in terms of what we came out with.

We hear from this government talk about protection for landlords by making the situation worse, by pulling apart the existing laws, by subjecting everyone to a high degree of uncertainty. Every tenant out there, and I suspect a majority of homeowners who are worried about the climate of our cities in terms of the conditions people live in, all those people now unfortunately have cause to be anxious about their situation, these destabilizing measures purposefully brought on by the minister.

What we don't know is how this minister believes he'll be able to get away with this. How does he think that even landlords are going to be able to deal with this harassment legislation? The harassment legislation you're putting in there is meant in your estimation to circumvent what you think is inevitable: that tenants will be harassed. I can tell you that you're insulting a lot of landlords out there by the way you're setting up an adversarial situation between them and their tenants.

You have created this situation deliberately, we have to believe, where landlords are now going to have to defend themselves against harassment charges, where landlords are going to find it in their interests to have tenants stay in a certain place for a shorter length of time. When you say that rent will only go up once a year, you know that's not true. If that apartment changes hands more than once, the rent will also go up. You know that's what you're subjecting tenants to. When you see that those kinds of provisions are there protecting landlords, there's no sense of how you're going to be able to protect tenants.

The harassment provisions are almost perverse in the way they're put in place. Understanding the way you've stripped down the existing rent protection enforcement, the number of people who are there, the time it takes to be heard, the fact you're planning to get rid of the rent registry — there will be no way to enforce how much rents are charged when there's no rent registry. Minister, you conveniently ignore that.

You talk about fines. Fines could be \$50,000, \$100,000, \$250 million if there's nobody to enforce them, because where do you plan to seek enforcement for these problems of tenants? You had planned to send them to the same overburdened municipalities on which you just dumped \$666 million worth of extra services.

It is clear you can't get away with this. It's clear nobody can believe this is a bill that will somehow help

to create affordable housing in this province or provide benefit to either tenants or in the long run to landlords. What we've heard from landlords in this province is that they want some long-term stability. They want to be able to look at an investment and be able to get a return. As we mentioned earlier, there are some of those returns already available to them. The option you had was to focus on where landlords and tenants could have agreed, but you decided not to because you're following in the footsteps of a government that chooses instead to have people on its side and then many other people on the other side.

Your calculation I presume is for tenants not to notice, for tenants to believe they'll be secure for a longer period of time, and to believe that as long as they're in their apartment they'll be safe. Now that you've taken away their Rental Housing Protection Act, unfortunately they're not safe. Even those tenants who have no intention of moving are still going to be subject to being made to leave. For that small but unfortunately significant number of bad landlords we have out there, they're subjected to harassment and the dubious provisions of your anti-harassment provisions. For others, it represents the possibility that their building would be subject to being converted into a condominium or even turned into a parking lot. There is nothing to protect that.

1630

Before 1985, when we had the Rental Housing Protection Act, there were something in the order of 2,000 conversions in Metropolitan Toronto in the previous 10 years, and since 1985 we've had 20. When we did have a time of a loophole, when a different kind of apartment was found to be available where you could exercise some level of ownership, hundreds of landlords took that route and took away apartments, took them off the market until that loophole was plugged in the late 1980s.

It shows us very clearly that you know what's going to happen when the Rental Housing Protection Act is gone. We're going to lose a tremendous amount of rental housing space in the cities that are dealing with, by and large, very difficult vacancy rates, inadequate supplies of housing and an already inequitable situation.

The minister has talked about being able to provide a better future in terms of the housing situation, but I don't think that even landlords can believe, given your unwillingness to work on the other things which face them — the cost of materials, the cost of land, the cost of taxes, and particularly taxes because it falls in your other portfolio to do with municipal government — your inability to work there, to be able to create openings for that inequity that tenants have to bear — a heavier burden of taxes than homeowners do — shows us, unfortunately, a certain lack of good faith in terms of where you'd like to see things turn out.

We see ourselves facing a completely changed situation in terms of how this province will evolve. We will see some people, those of us who are able to be homeowners, having a certain kind of existence; that housing is also expensive. Those taxes will certainly be more, and perhaps that's meant to distract us from the situation of those of our colleagues and our neighbours who will be

undergoing the twists and turns you're going to be providing through a double whammy.

You're going to be taking away people's ability to have achievable rents, rents they could at least conceivably afford, predictable rents, all of that provided under the existing rent control legislation. You would swipe all of that away and give them instead bushels and bushels of uncertainty. You would provide that and the possibility their rent could go up as much as 7% a year, and even more, particularly when you've made this provision. So that we can at least admire that there is some coordination taking place between the different parts of the minister's responsibility, you've made sure that should landlords receive a tax increase, and they're bound to get a tax increase now that you're dumping on municipalities, they're able to get all of that tax back from tenants. So it's 7% plus that you're making now available as a routine kind of tax increase with the capital costs, with the costs you have for repairs and so on, and for inflation.

You've protected the landlords' end well. It is unfortunate you could not see yourself doing anywhere near that kind of job for tenants.

I think all across this province pretty soon, in a couple of weeks, there will be a lot of people who, when they pay their rent, already have a sense that they've paid too much. They recognize that there is a lot that we have to offer in our larger cities in Ontario, but they understand that they pay that Ontario premium, that they pay extra.

They did so in 1974. Rent controls were brought in to deal with that exigency. It takes a farsighted government — not this government — to be able to deal with the underlying reasons why Ontario has not been able to provide decent, affordable housing to so many of its citizens. It takes a certain other kind of government, a government unwilling to look at the basic facts, unwilling to entertain any kind of plan that would have a prospect of bringing together landlords and tenants on some of kind of basis to improve the rental housing market in this province, it takes a different kind of government than that to destroy the prospect of that being able to take place.

That's what we have in the legislation in front of us today. We have a tenant rejection act that really puts tenants in a very uncomfortable place. We have an act as well that is not kind to landlords in giving them all these extra tools to get yields, not to the best landlords, not to the ones who want a stable housing market, not to the ones who want tenants who will trust them and see that they don't have tools at their disposal to create a situation of disadvantage.

I believe that's not of interest to a vast majority of landlords in this province, but unfortunately it's a certain kind of government that we have in place right now. Once it has set its sights — and these sights have been set since right after the by-election. Last year we started to hear noise about the shape of this legislation. We saw their white paper. We see a bill that puts in place exactly, almost to the word, the provisions of that white paper. So we understand very well, unfortunately, that this is a government unlikely to change the shape of this bill, a government that when it hears from its constituents in this regard may not change its mind.

But we hold out some possibility. We know that across Metropolitan Toronto, to give an example — and perhaps through other parts of the province facing amalgamations, like Chatham-Kent — there is no longer an abiding respect for this government in the sense that this is a government that would do what it says it would do.

We know this is a government whose Premier said, "I can guarantee you I will not close hospitals." We know this is a government whose Minister of Housing said, "Rent control has got to go." We know this is a government whose Premier authorized a statement saying he would lower rents and increase tenant protection. That is what the Premier of this particular government had to say in May 1996, and to permit this minister to bring forward a bill that does almost completely the opposite I think shows us very clearly the actual stance of this government.

It is not with pleasure that I address this particular bill, but with a sense of what this province may be able to deliver in response to this minister. This is a province that is now watching what this government is up to, and I believe this is a province that won't be lulled by the stealth provisions of this bill that would tell people to simply relax and not worry, that their particular apartment won't be the one to worry about, that it's only when you're planning to move that you need to get excited about this, and "For those of you who are in good apartments that could be turned into condominiums, don't you worry either."

Unfortunately for this government, as we saw with the megacity, the public is too wise for that. The public has now caught on that this is a government that doesn't follow through with what it says it would do. This is a government that needs to be held to whatever parts of its mandate the public would still like to see it implement, but this is a government that needs to be called to the test always on fundamental issues of fairness, because it has simply shown itself incapable of doing it by itself.

Ladies and gentlemen, we hope that each of you will re-examine this legislation in light of recent events, in light of the inadequacies that have been shown. We can accept those certainly as preparation problems, as what happens when a government tries to do too much too fast, but you should be clear, this is a defining bill for this government. How you proceed with the basic housing availability, how much money you're willing to take out of the pockets of people to feed some very narrow group of interests in this province will define you as a government, and it will also define you as a force in society.

I believe there are still people out there willing to extend to your government some level of respect. If you follow through on this bill and if you punish people for no crime, for nothing but the happenstance of their happening to be in rental accommodation in this province, you'll find yourself far on the wrong side of a discussion that you simply can't win.

Mr Curling: I'm really very happy to have the opportunity to speak on this legislation which they call the Tenant Protection Act, Bill 96. I think it is very important that we look at the historic process of rent control, because what happens here is that rent control has been one of the most emotional issues that goes through legislation.

As you may recall, it was the Tory government in 1975 that brought in rent control. After extraordinary pressure by tenants who were being denied proper accommodation and some exploitation by some landlords, they saw fit to bring in rent control. I should also mention that in 1975 there was strong campaigning by Stephen Lewis from the NDP, who had pushed hard so that the Conservative government of the day saw the light. In 1986 the Liberal Party brought in their rent control legislation, and I, at the time, was the Minister of Housing. That was Bill 51. What it did was strengthen the rent control legislation brought in by the Tories at the time.

1640

I remember, as they said, what a turmoil it was getting a balance, to be fair to landlords and also to make sure that tenants are protected and get a fair deal in the commodity into which they were buying. I remember very well that the Conservative Party supported Bill 51 very strongly, and they were consistent. I see a few of my colleagues who are here today, still in the House. One such member is now the Premier, Mike Harris. He supported Bill 51 very strongly. My friend Marg Marland also supported that, and my colleague Mr Villeneuve supported Bill 51 with all the support that was needed to protect tenants and to make sure that landlords are treated fairly. It was quite applauded at the time. Mr McLean, the former Speaker of the House, also supported that very strongly.

These are Conservative members who believe that tenants should be protected, that the homes of people are affordable and when they purchase a commodity, they should get worth for their money. These were colleagues who believed that landlords who were investing and providing accommodation and providing that commodity should get a fair return on their investment.

That is why I think Bill 51 was applauded in that way. Unfortunately, the NDP did not support that bill for their own reasons, but we did go through and that bill made it after a year in office. Again, as I have always said, it was not a perfect bill. It needed improvement as it went along. There are things that we could have done more. We thought there would be improvement on that.

When the NDP came into power, they reformed that legislation and, of course, they put guidelines in and strengthened, as they would say, the rent control legislation. In 1994 the NDP also extended rent control to care homes and private retirement homes, and I would say that, yes, some of these were controversial issues, but the intent was to protect people. These were people's homes and they have to be protected.

Rent control has been quite an emotional issue within this House, but here we are now debating Bill 96, which is called the Tenant Protection Act. It's rather interesting that they call it the Tenant Protection Act. As you read through this legislation, what it does is end rent control, and one of the most important parts of tenant protection is to have rent control, so that the commodity, what they're buying, is protected and not being escalated for those who are unable to afford it.

Lo and behold, they have said they had this discussion paper, the Lampert report. I travelled the province with my colleagues, and many of my colleagues travelled and

listened to tenants and special-interest groups, as the Conservative Party would say. Those special-interest groups were tenant organizations and landlords too, who wanted to give their version of why they need rent control, and some, of course, spoke about why they did not want rent control.

The three million people who are protected under rent control in this province spoke very loud. They said the discussion paper was not focused enough or did not include the things they wanted, and they rejected it. This government said it was only a discussion paper, but what happened? They proceeded to draft Bill 96 exactly like it, without listening.

They said they had discussion, but they did not listen at all. Thousands of other people also wanted to give their contribution on the discussion paper they brought forward, but they were denied, in the typical manner of the Conservative government, which is in a hurry and tries to undermine democracy in every way; in other words, to undermine the process in which people can make their presentation and let their concerns be heard. They thought they knew it all — no need to listen.

They have been consistent in that approach, which has been labelled the bully approach, an undemocratic approach, right through the process. I think if they had listened carefully, they would have had a better bill, not a bill that says one thing in the title and says something else in the body. This is not a tenant protection act; it does the reverse.

What it does is that it will remove rent control from apartments when they become vacant, and I want to deal with that a bit. They're saying, "No, people will be protected once they're in the apartment." My colleagues the members for Windsor-Walkerville and for St Catharines also said that tenants will be prisoners in their own homes — a strong statement, but fact.

Seniors who have come to my constituency office are concerned that their needs have changed and they would like to move. They ask, if they move under this legislation, what will happen. I've told them this government has dictated, relayed, that their rents will go up, meaning that once they move from that apartment and aren't protected any more under rent control, they have to renegotiate all over with a new landlord, who can then raise the rent to whatever level he or she feels like. That's not right.

Seniors are saying: "When I was younger, I was able to jump on the bus and go here and there. My distance of movement could be much wider because I was much more mobile. Now I would like to move to an area where things are more convenient for me, where things are within walking distance. But if I do so, I will lose the protection of the place I have lived for a long time; I will lose the protection of a rent-controlled building."

This government decided that the only way to go is to eliminate rent control and call it the Tenant Protection Act. You see, this government is systematic in how it goes about dealing with those who are more vulnerable in our society. It's a rather calculated way in which they deal with those who have affordability problems. If you recall, one of the first things this government did when it came in was to reduce the welfare allowance by almost

22%, attacking the most vulnerable in our society, those who are paying much more than 30% of their disposable income in rent.

I recall very well that the minister then stated in this House that they could go and negotiate for new rent if they wanted to. Many individuals have come to me in my riding of Scarborough North and said, "All I have left after I pay my rent is \$100 to feed my two kids, and the 22% cut in my allowance has now caused me to choose between food or accommodation."

They've become more vulnerable in our society — how insensitive — by the government's looking after only their friends or those interest groups that were saying, "Let's get rid of rent control, because the individuals within those units are occupying nice space we can get lots more money for." Let me pursue that part too.

1650

There are many landlords who have the rents at a certain level and cannot get adequate rent. They're allowed to increase the rent allowed by the guideline that was laid out in Bill 51; they can increase their rent according to the guideline. Many landlords were not able to get the amount it was advertised for; tenants were paying far less. In other words, the market could not accommodate it. Yet they say, "Get rid of rent control so we can raise the rent to the ceiling." I wonder why. Why would you want to raise it higher when you can't even get the price you're asking for? They were just obsessed with the fact that rent control is this demon that must be gotten rid of.

The most vulnerable in our society are not protected. This government just callously went ahead and said: "What we will do is that we will name this the Tenant Protection Act, but don't worry. In the body of it all, we will take away the protection." The minister came in here and tried to convince us all, "Now we are protecting tenants." They're not protecting tenants, not one bit.

The next move this minister promised was that he wanted to privatize the 84,000 units owned by the government, wanted to sell them off. I remember going to the minister and telling him that it would be one of the most impossible things to do because of the state of those homes. They're in terrible condition and nobody will buy them. But he talked about the Thatcherite kind of approach, that we should do like England did: Sell those council houses to those in residence.

Hon Ms Mushinski: That was a good move.

Mr Curling: The Minister of Culture says it's a good move, but she may recall — she is so busy in her job — that most of those units in England could not be sold after a time. The good ones were bought up and the bad ones were left, those that were neglected by the government.

Most of the 84,000 units here that this government has had are in poor shape, so when the minister decided to put them on the market, what he found was that the private sector was saying, "There is no way I will buy them in that condition." So what did they do? They decided they should maybe fix them up and have a fire sale, selling the homes from under the people who need them most, saying: "We won't protect those places. We will not support bricks and mortar; we will support people."

In the public hearings we had on the discussion paper, some of those landlords were saying, "Can we keep those guarantees of increase while you get rid of rent control?" They wanted protection all the way. They went further: They wanted the cheques of those on welfare to be given to the landlord first so that he or she takes their money out. There's no protection there.

I will tell you, Mr Minister, the people will not stand for that. It is their home and they will protect it with all their might. They will protect it to make sure they have decent, affordable homes.

There is nothing wrong with a government — as a matter of fact, the intent of government is to protect those most vulnerable in our society. As I said before, the Minister of Housing said he wanted to get out of the housing business. Here's a minister who doesn't want to do his job, because to be Minister of Housing, especially to be one the largest landlords we have, the second-largest landlord in North America, the Ontario Housing Corp — the houses are in terrible condition. It's not the tenants who put them in that condition. It is the landlord, the government, that did not maintain them in a proper way.

What he's trying to do, and I can see that, is to chase those folks out of those units into the private sector so that, as he said, it will create more housing. I can't understand how that will create more housing. It will not. Right now the vacancy rate is so low and landlords and developers are not building. There are no more units out there for them to go to, but what they are doing is trying to chase them out. What they want is all of these 84,000 units — the private sector. This government is not protecting them in any way.

I have to appeal to this government, when you go out on the road for public hearings, not in any way to rush this thing through. Listen to the tenants. Listen to the landlords too because this should not only be a tenant act; it has to be with landlords and tenants.

In the short time I have I want to comment on the process. I am hearing that those who have problems with their landlords, with harassment and so on, can go before a tribunal to be heard. The minister responsible for human rights would understand this. The backlog at the Human Rights Commission is awful. The minister looked up and said, "There's no more backlog"; that's the expression on her face. What they have done is throw out all those that they feel, that they say are vexatious or frivolous.

If you don't have a lawyer to get your rights — tenants who are having an affordability problem will have to seek a lawyer to confront that big bureaucracy because of course the landlord will be quite organized. He or she has vested interests and would like to protect their capital, and I agree with them. But the tenants are at a disadvantage to defend their rights — the neglect of maintenance, the neglect of gouging. Now the government has given landlords the right to raise the rent as high as possible for those people who are having a tremendous affordability problem.

This government is saying it's a tenant protection plan. It is not. If you want to have good landlord and tenant protection legislation, listen to the people. But this is not the way of this government. This government has the way

of a fixed mind. They say one thing and do something else. In their Common Sense Revolution, when they declared war on the poor and the most vulnerable, they said they would not end rent control. It's in there, in their little Bible, but as I said, they will say one thing and do something else. They will have one title and then in the legislation itself rip away all the protection of the tenants.

We can have balanced legislation that protects tenants and also protects the interests of landlords, and there's nothing wrong with that. Landlords are there, of course, with their investment to make a profit. That is what the process is all about. But now we have left tenants vulnerable to all the landlords and also to those individuals in government who should be protecting tenants who have no protection.

1700

When this minister was appointed, he said to his landlord friends, "Now you have a friend; at last you have a friend who will protect you."

One wonders where the most vulnerable are in society who need decent and affordable housing. I see this bill, this legislation, levelling more discrimination to the poor, to new immigrants, from those who want to discriminate in any way they can, denying people the basic right of accommodation. It's a right. Housing is a right and it must be protected by the government. Free markets cannot help that. It has to be protected. That's why we have to have maintenance laws, and enforceable laws, not \$50,000 or \$100,000, so when they go to the judge he may feel it is extraordinary and therefore they're let go.

I will be looking very closely at this legislation, and my colleague from Windsor-Walkerville will make sure, as he goes around the province, that all tenants and landlords who want to be heard will be heard. As my colleague stated, my party, at election time when we become the government, will repeal this law. We'll make sure we have a rent control law that protects tenants and gives a fair shake to landlords. It was done before and can be done again. Regardless of what you have done today, we will make sure, if you continue in the same way without listening to the people, that we reverse that act.

It's important to tenants and it's important to landlords. It's important to the state of the buildings they live in. You must understand that when you dabble in this, you're dabbling in people's homes. These are their homes, the homes in which they live and raise a family and make this country, this province, a great place. This Tenant Protection Act will bite the dust one way or the other, whether by those tenants and the interest groups that will be coming forward when the public hearings come about or whether they wait until we become the government. At that time we will make sure the tenants in this province are protected under good legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comment and questions?

Mr Bisson: I listened intently to the member for Scarborough North who said the government should be consistent in how it treats landlords and tenants. If there's somebody who shouldn't preach from the pulpit about consistency, it is the Liberal caucus, and certainly not the member for Scarborough North. I remember clearly in

1992-93, when the NDP government brought forth rent control legislation, the very legislation the Tories are taking away. What happened? The Tories were consistent. They voted against it in 1992-93, and then when they got into government, got rid of it. I don't like it, but they're consistent.

But the Liberals, when it comes to consistency, voted against the NDP legislation when we were in power. Now they've got the gall to come into this House and are suddenly converted, saying, "We're all in favour of NDP rent control legislation and we should keep it in place." I'm glad you're fellow travellers in this fight, but where were you, Mr Curling, in 1992-93? Where were you when it came to the tenants of Ontario? You and your caucus were out there busily trying to argue that the rent control legislation shouldn't be put in and that it was a terrible thing and that in the end you'd vote against it.

I remember being there, so when I see the Liberals get up in this House and suddenly say, "I'm all in favour of tenant protection, I want to do the right thing, the Tories are so bad, they're getting rid of rent control legislation," excuse me, on that issue the Liberal caucus has absolutely no credibility. Don't come into this House all of a sudden trying to woo the voters of Ontario, claiming to be the big friend of tenants in this province, because we know that the Liberal Party in power was the friend of whom? It was the friend of developers, and they made darned sure the developers were well done by. Now all of a sudden they're converts. I'm sorry, but when I see it, I've got to call a spade a spade and an ace an ace. In this case certainly you have not been consistent in your position. At least you should be honest in making sure the members of this gallery know this.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It was interesting to hear how the Liberals have recently flip-flopped, consistent with previous performances, and to see it being pointed out here in tenant protection. We heard an awful lot of talk about tenant protection. We didn't hear very much about landlord protection. I can tell you that some of the saddest stories I've heard in my riding office come from landlords telling about some of the things that have happened to homes they prize, homes of their parents they've rented out, and how those homes have been destroyed by tenants. Let me tell you, there should be a reasonable balance, and there hasn't been a reasonable balance in the past. This bill will bring a reasonable balance for tenant rights as well as for landlord rights.

When you bring in government interference — and this is what happened back in the minority government in the mid-1970s — things get all out of whack, all out of balance and kilter. There's a lot to be said about supply and demand, and that does bring a reasonable balance. With the interference of the Tenant Protection Act that came in in the 1970s, certainly we lost that kind of thing, and the supply of apartments and homes has gone steadily downhill ever since. We do not have, and haven't had over recent years, a reasonable supply of apartments for tenants. That's one of the problems. That's one of the reasons tenants do not have protection today.

Let me tell you that the very best protection a tenant can have is a good supply of apartments and homes out there so that they have a choice. That is the best protec-

tion they possibly can have. With the kind of legislation we've had in the past, landlords or developers are not going to develop the kinds of properties tenants want to rent. I suggest to you that this legislation will bring a reasonable supply. Builders and developers are taking a second look and will provide a reasonable supply in the future for tenants.

Mr Bradley: Of course that's exactly what will not happen. I can say to the previous speaker that will not happen. If it were to happen, one would be extremely surprised in this province, because that has not been the case at all in other circumstances where rent controls have been removed. That is simply not the case.

What we see now is that during the last provincial election campaign, as we talked to people in apartment buildings, many of them said: "Well, we don't have to worry, because the Conservative Party is in favour of rent control. They're not going to end rent control." Now the same people, many of whom are seniors who had felt comfortable with the previous Conservative administration, with the Bill Davis administration, are now saying: "We're very much afraid. We see that our hospitals are being closed by this government. We see that there are user fees being imposed on senior citizens in terms of health care."

They see a cutback in a number of government services, those services which are used by seniors in the province, and they're extremely concerned when they see this happen, because they have felt in the past, as I say, quite comfortable with the Conservative Party and now they're finding out that the Conservative Party is bringing in a bill that's going to end rent control. These people are going to be extremely vulnerable. The only way they can dodge this problem of losing rent control is to remain prisoners in their own apartment, not able to move to various places in the province. So they're concerned.

Those who live in rental accommodation are concerned that the ability of the major, huge landlords to convert to a different kind of accommodation, that is condominium from rental, is going to be much easier.

What will happen as a result of this legislation is that very vulnerable people will not be protected, and indeed we will not see any more accommodation; we will see a net loss in rental accommodation in Ontario.

1710

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): It was very interesting to hear the member for Scarborough North talking, because I have some things he has said over the years. For instance, on June 24, 1991, he said: "Let's not go about insulting investors and landlords. Let's not feel that tenants are the only ones to be protected in this process, but all."

On June 21, 1991, he said: "Bill 121" — the NDP rent control bill — "does not in any way protect tenants and landlords. It hurts both landlords and tenants. It does not provide funds that are needed to complete the necessary repairs on the province's aging rental housing."

We spent the entire month of August last year in committee, travelling around the province trying to hear so many different viewpoints on rent control.

Mr Marchese: I was there.

Mr Wettlaufer: Many of us were, and we heard a lot of the problems. One thing that came out loud and clear is that 80% of landlords are small landlords; they own buildings of six units or less. Most of these landlords are immigrants who came here after the Second World War: Italians, Poles, Germans. These buildings that are rented out represent their life savings, represent their pensions. We can't only be talking about protection for the tenant; we must be talking about protection for the landlords as well. That is what we tried to do with this legislation. We tried to make it a balance, as the member for Scarborough North talked about.

Mr Curling: That's right.

Mr Wettlaufer: Tenants will not be harassed. They can bring charges of harassment against landlords, but landlords cannot bring charges of harassment against them.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-Walkerville, two minutes.

Mr Duncan: To wrap up, I am reminded yet again this week of Kipling's words, "If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools."

I'd like to remind my colleagues in the third party that when Bill 51 was brought forward, a bill that arguably extended rent controls more than any other piece of legislation, interestingly the NDP voted against it: Allen, Breaugh, Bryden, Charlton, Cooke, Fish, Gigantes, Grande, Grier, Hayes, a whole list of them. Oh, my goodness, I also looked at how the third party of the day voted. Look at this. In favour of rent control: Harris, Marland, McLean, Sterling, Villeneuve. Flip-flop. Flip-flop over there; flip-flop over there.

We support legislation that will protect landlords. We support legislation, moreover, that will protect tenants. A balance can be found. You've lost the balance. You've lost credibility. I remind you that this minister said on October 19, 1995: "I've said it before and I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go."

When we beat you in 1999 we will scrap this bill and we'll bring forward meaningful rent control that will serve the tenants of this province and serve the landlords, not abandon the poor and the most vulnerable to a market that can't possibly protect them. We'll be consistent in our word. We will do it; we'll do it as quickly as we can. We'll bring forward legislation that will undo what you've done to tenants in this province, and we'll do so quite proudly.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair. I'm happy to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 96. I want to begin by saying that we really don't have much time to revisit the sins of the Liberal Party; we are here together today, side by side, to attack a common enemy that is by far a little more dangerous, I would add, because although the Tories are more consistent, they are more consistently bad, usually all the time, in areas that affect vulnerable people.

I know that my friends here want me to be kind and reasonable as I discuss this bill, because they hate it when I become vociferous; I have noted that. So I'm going to do my best to be as reasonable as I possibly can without

being vociferous, but I'm going to tell you it's going to be very difficult. So you will see from time to time that I will be able to have a voice that's reasonable to you and from time to time it will be an angry voice, because what you are doing is, you honourable members on the other side and to my left here, you are about to whack 33% of the population, most of whom are tenants, with some serious injury with Bill 96. You are about to whack most of these people, these tenants, with an increase in their rents that most of them cannot afford. That is why it's going to be very difficult for me to stand here and try to be reasonable in order to please a few Tories who want us on this other side of the House to be kind every now and then as we respond to the evils of the acts they introduce.

Who are these tenants that we're talking about? We lose sight of the fact that these tenants are human beings who are trying to make a living and trying to have a home in order to protect themselves and their families.

Mr Wettlaufer: And the landlord too. They are human.

Mr Marchese: Most of these tenants, 33% of them, M. Wettlaufer, are low-income people.

We're not talking about wealthy tenants. We're not dealing with their interest groups here. We are dealing with, by and large, a third of 3.4 million people who are earning less than \$22,000 a year. A third of those three million-plus are earning less than \$22,000 a year. We're dealing with vulnerable people. We're not dealing with their developer friends, their rich financial backers or their rich landlord friends with whom they are hand in hand, drooling along as they attempt to pass this bill because there are benefits to both parties.

We are talking about people who are seniors and vulnerable. We know that seniors are poor. We know that more and more seniors have become poor under this government — and under the federal Liberal government, I would add — than at any other time in our history. Their earning power has diminished under this government and under the federal Liberal government as well, and it is diminishing rapidly. They have less and less to spend on basic needs.

We have people who are disabled, who live in these homes, in these rental units, who do not have the means to move around and find some rich, luxurious rental accommodation. The Tories speak of choice as if somehow we have wonderful choices for these people out there. The choices are not many. They have very few places to move around to.

Mr Wettlaufer: Because of rent control.

Mr Marchese: Mr Wettlaufer says, "Because of rent control." I will try to get to these points as reasonably as I can in order to be able to deal with this.

We have seniors who are on low incomes; we have people with disabilities who obviously, because of their disabilities, earn little; we have single mothers with children, who because of that have a diminished ability to pay for rent and for other basic needs. That's the kind of tenant we're talking about. We lose sight of that.

I know the Tories always lose sight of that because they seem not to talk of people. They seem to talk about their landlord friends and what we need to do in order to

get their developers to build more, but they never talk about how these vulnerable people will be hurt by this bill, the so-called Tenant Protection Act. That is the difference between this Tory-Reform government and we New Democrats. The difference is we worry about what happens to vulnerable people, and these honourable members on the other side don't have the same concerns. If they did, this bill would not be before us.

1720

When the Minister of Culture earlier on talked about special-interest groups and accused the social democrats of being so closely allied to so many special-interest groups, she's right. She's so absolutely right. In fact I say proudly that I am a big supporter of these special-interest groups: a big supporter of tenants; a big supporter of injured workers; a big supporter of single mothers who have greater needs to worry about; a big supporter of women who are, for one reason or another, on the streets or battered by men who do that for one reason or another; a big supporter of people of colour who, in my view, have been discriminated against for years, and that's likely to continue in spite of the government's claim that we are all equal and we have a Human Rights Code that prohibits discrimination. I'm a big supporter of an aboriginal community that doesn't share the same benefits of capitalism as the rest of us because of the long history of what we did to those communities. Mr Wettlaufer, I'm a big supporter of all these communities that are disfranchised.

Mr Wettlaufer: So am I.

Mr Marchese: I know you believe you are, but you need to manifest your actions by carrying through bills, and this is not it. This bill is not a manifestation of support for vulnerable people; it is a manifestation of support for the powerful. You people support the rich and the powerful. That is your interest group and you delight in that. They drool in that. I'd like to see the account of the Minister of Municipal Affairs in terms of all the meetings he has had with a number of these people over the last year and half or two. It would be very telling, I have no doubt; at the taxpayers' expense, I have no doubt as well.

But I tell you, the interest groups you are supporting have the big bucks and the power to influence each and every one of you, and some of you are very closely interconnected, interlocked by individual or family connections. All of you, most of you, are interconnected to the powerful interest groups of this province. That's what the audience who is watching needs to understand.

The sad thing is that as we social democrats support the causes of the most vulnerable, these very people end up not supporting us. It's a strange dichotomy. It's a strange paradoxical thing that the very people we support either do not vote, or if they do vote, they end up supporting the evil-doers on the other side. It is the most insane thing that happens in society, that the victims end up supporting their victimizers. Paradoxical. It's strange. I've always found that so very difficult and complicated to believe.

A lot of your upper-middle-class supporters, your rich, wealthy Ontarian friends, believe that it is the poor and the vulnerable who support us. They don't realize that is

not the case. In fact, you'll probably find that you honourable members have more supporters of those we end up fighting for and worrying about than we do.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): Doesn't that tell you something?

Mr Marchese: It does tell us something. It does. That should not and does not deter the rest of us from continuing to fight on their behalf, because that's what social democracy is all about. Because this is the reality I'm expressing, we could not, all of a sudden, change our politics and start supporting the wealthy. They already have enough parties to do that. They've got you and they've got the Liberals to do that, and they now have the Reform Party. They now have another party called the Reform Party, which is an even greater supporter of the wealthy than you fine, honourable Conservative members.

There are plenty of parties — Liberals, Tories, Reform — who support the wealthy so we need not be trapped in doing that. We can't. In spite of the reality that I am expressing, we continue to support the weak and the vulnerable in society, and the growing middle class that is diminishing as a class because it's becoming poorer and poorer. We will stand by them no matter what.

Mr Wettlaufer: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: The member for Fort York has been criticizing the Liberals, saying where they stand. I think it should be on the record that the Liberals aren't representative of the big interests. They don't know where they are.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: The Liberals and the Tories are cousins politically, unlike any other parties in Canada — close cousins; in fact I suggest that half of that party caucus or half of their members probably belong to your party but are holding on to some conscience that we social democrats nurture in this society. This is unfortunately the reality in this country. We have a Liberal Party that will vacillate between the right and the left whenever it needs to, and we've got to deal with that. But this is not the issue of today. That's not what we're talking about.

Before I got interrupted by a motion that was not in order, I was arguing that I still remain optimistic that the people watching will eventually take sides with this party, the social democratic party, because they will see this Conservative Party driving a wedge between the wealthy and the poor, and they will side not with the very wealthy, who obviously are not with them, but with those who are much more victims of these Tories than they think. I am optimistic that that will change.

I want to get back to the document called the tenant protection package. Mr Wettlaufer, the member for Kitchener, will remember this. We dealt with this for four weeks. M. Villeneuve, we dealt with this for four weeks. We went out with this document called the tenant protection package to have hearings. I want to deal first with the title, because it is something that I have addressed in the past and I want to continue to address. I want to bring in a line from Shakespeare, because it speaks very well to this party, to its natural face. One of the Shakespearean lines that I remember so vividly is this — M. Villeneuve, écoutez — "Fair is foul, and foul

is fair." It's a theme of deception. It's a theme of reality versus appearances. That is what "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" means.

M. Villeneuve, should I continue to expound? You seem perplexed by it. I'll do my best to try to explain what I mean. The point of it is this: It's a theme in literature that is a constant one, and that is what is real and unreal, appearances versus reality. This title in its appearance is called tenant protection; in its reality it has nothing to do with tenants. "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." Shakespeare had a sense of this 400 or 500 years ago.

Seventy-three per cent of the deputants who came — *Interjection.*

Mr Marchese: Minister of Municipal Affairs, you weren't there. Seventy-three per cent of the deputants who came before the meeting that Mr Wettlaufer attended, by and large — I think he was there most of the time — said, "We don't like this." This is your tenant protection package. They said: "We support rent control. Keep rent control, because that's the best protection we've got."

Hon Mr Leach: That's because all your activists would be there.

Mr Marchese: Activists? Monsieur le ministre, it had nothing to do with the activists. They were there, true, but the majority of people who came were just innocent people who are very concerned about what is about to happen to tenants.

Mr Wettlaufer: And innocent small landlords too.

Mr Marchese: Organizations. I call them innocent because they are organizations that are very concerned, and I know you, Minister, as a minister of the cloth, would be very concerned, because you have been there. You have been there and you are very worried about these very people I'm speaking about.

The very people those organizations came to speak about were concerned about the so-called tenant protection package. They said: "Rent control is our best protection. Do not take it away." Four weeks of hearings. I thought this government surely will listen to them, because this government prides itself in listening to people. I know they drool together with their developer and landlord friends as part of the meal they share on a daily basis. I know that happens, but they do not listen to those who have no power.

1730

We had four weeks of hearings. In the clause-by-clause, I expected and anticipated a debate on what we heard, and do you know what they did? The parliamentary assistant, from somewhere that I cannot recall now, did not say, "Speaker, we need a debate on what we heard." He said, "We listened, and now we're going to refer the entire package to the minister," presumably for his pleasure, to read and to do whatever. Not one hour of debate on what 73% of those who came in front of the committee had to say.

All they did was to listen to the other 27% of the population, developers, landlords and their buddies, political buddies who came in front of the committee and said, "You're on the right track, Minister, keep going, you're doing fine." They were Tories by and large, landlords and developers, who came in front of the

committee and said, "The system is broke," as the minister says from time to time. "The system is broke. We've got to fix it."

You hear Tory after Tory, minister after minister, constantly saying the system is broken, they've got to fix it. It's like having a butcher do an operation on you. That's what this change is all about. When the system is broken, it's like having a butcher do the operation on your lungs. That is what it's all about. Would you trust butchers to do an operation for you when they say: "Your heart is not well. We need to fix it"? No. But what we have is butchery in this province. We have butchers as surgeons; that's what we've got.

I wanted to give you the background of the tenant protection package, because it is critical for the audience that is watching to know you have not listened.

What we did with rent control when we were in power as New Democrats was to try to bring some predictability to the system, some measure of control, so that vulnerable tenants would not face the increases they had to endure during the Tory regime of the past and during the Liberal regime before we got into power, where rent increases under rent review with the Liberals skyrocketed anywhere from 10% to 110%. People could not afford those increases. That's why we brought in rent control.

Ordinary people could not afford those increases, and what you have had in the past under the Tories and the Liberals is a constant increase of rent and a diminishing amount of money coming in from the salaries they were getting from whatever source, and as this government fires so many, 15,000, 20,000, 25,000 people, as the federal Liberals fire 40,000 people, what happens is people end up on the streets. The unemployment level is so high, the highest we have ever seen, under a Conservative regime that claims to open up these markets so that jobs would flow from that Niagara waterfall. They would flow eternally. Nothing is flowing except balderdash and bull. That's what's flowing down that waterfall.

We have the highest unemployment in the country in our history under Tories, and under Liberals federally. They boast about the number of jobs they're creating under a Conservative climate of investment, and the Liberals, their federal cousins, boast of the jobs they're creating, and unemployment is close to 10%. But under the Tories who were going to create this climate for investment, climate for jobs, already two years on the job, unemployment in Ontario is so excessive. It is excessive to the point where many, many are suffering because of it.

The salaries of those individuals who have been fired by this government have diminished if not disappeared. There is no money left, and the people who are finding jobs are earning little in those jobettes, in those McJobs. They're earning so little many of them can't afford to even pay their rent. Some of them are spending close to 70% of what they have on rent. That's what it's all about.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Whose fault is that?

Mr Marchese: It's your fault, M. Beaubien. It is this government that's causing the insult and the injury to vulnerable people. It's your fault. It's certainly not ours. As you pass on a transfer of money from tenants to landlords, you say it is our fault, that we're causing this

problem? You, M. Beaubien, you, Monsieur le ministre, as you transfer money from tenants, who have little to give, to landlords, who have a great deal, it's unconscionable. You caused that problem, not us.

When I speak in this House, I'm not speaking to Tory members. I know you are so ideologically anchored that you are immovable. I need to talk to those who are watching. That is to whom I am speaking, not you, because I know you're not listening. I knew in committee you weren't listening. You don't listen as a government. We've seen this in the amalgamation file, when you amalgamated the cities in Metropolitan Toronto; 76% of the population rejected what you had to say. You didn't listen. That is the trademark of this party.

The propaganda of this government never ceases: the "tenant protection" package. These Tories want to leave this whole issue of rents to the market. The member for Northumberland said earlier, "The best protection is a good supply of houses," so they have choice. There is no choice and I'll tell you why there is no choice. I want to get to the goals the minister spoke about. There's no choice because no one is building, and the minister says, "That's why we're passing Bill 96" — this so-called Tenant Protection Act — "because we want the developers and the investors to build." The minister surely must know or ought to know that is not the case. Whether he knows or deliberately doesn't understand what he reads is something I cannot speak to, but he should know. He should look at the facts.

There was a study done by Greg Lampert, a discussion paper, *The Challenge of Encouraging Investment in New Rental Housing in Ontario*. He says, "Based on a pro forma of a typical new rental apartment project in Toronto developed by the industry, the estimated gap between the economic rent required to make the project viable and the achievable market rent is estimated by the industry to total over \$3,000 per unit annually." There is a gap and it's \$3,000. So the developer is saying, "I can't build the kind of housing you want me to build because I can't make enough money." The minister with great fanfare says, "This bill will make them build housing." How do we make them build housing? How do we overcome the gap? This is what this economist hired by the Tories said —

Mr Galt: Get out of the way.

Mr Marchese: No, the member for Northumberland. You would like us out of the way.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order, member for Northumberland.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker, for being around. We need your help every now and then.

Here's what the industry said: "The industry recommends a number of measures to overcome the gap. These are outlined below, along with the estimated annual per unit cost savings, for the typical project which would result from each measure." Member for Northumberland, try to pay attention to these figures, if you don't mind, while you're underlining or writing, please.

1740

They say, "Reduce development charges," and they put a price to that. If you reduce development charges, I'm

not sure by how much, maybe 30%, 40%, 50%, it's not quite clear, you would have a saving of that gap of \$355. To be fair, you fine, honourable Tories have already begun to do that work because you started to reduce the development charges. We're still debating that. You had the Mississauga mayor who fought you on that so you had to backtrack a little bit because they weren't happy with what you were doing. But you've got to reduce development charges if you want to get close to that gap. It says, "Equalize property taxes \$1,200," and you're moving in that direction. "Halve the GST payable, streamline regulations on building, halve the CMHC mortgage insurance fee, lower administration due to reform of the rent regulations" — that's the one we're dealing with. That value is \$200. You introduce this bill and you save 200 bucks, member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Oh, I'm listening.

Mr Marchese: Finally, "eliminate provincial capital tax," \$3,000 worth; they tell you how to do it. You introduce Bill 96, and the savings for that is approximately 200 bucks.

Now, member for Northumberland, member for Kitchener, do you think this will do it, help the developer build affordable housing?

Mr Wettlaufer: That's one of the things.

Mr Marchese: It is the smallest of things. The point is this: Your developer friends are not going to build any housing that is affordable. You know what they're building, Mr Wettlaufer? They are building luxury condominiums.

Mr Wettlaufer: You know what will happen, though? The people who can afford that —

The Speaker: Member for Kitchener, come to order.

Mr Marchese: I appreciate the help, because I'm shouting over his voice. It really gets tiring after a while. You would understand that, Speaker. You've been there.

The point is that the developers are building condominiums because that's all they make money on. They're not building affordable housing. Why? Because they make no money.

When the minister speaks and these other members do their two minutes, who are they trying to help? When members say they care about low-income people, how do you care? How do you manifest that care?

Mr Wettlaufer from Kitchener, we're going to have a housing crisis in the next couple of years. Some say we have it now. I tell you, I predict a housing crisis that will be enormous, because you, Tory government, said you want to get out of the housing business, and the private sector is getting out of the housing business because they can't afford to build because they don't make any money, so what we are going to have is a serious housing shortage. We will have a hell of a time housing people who have very little income.

Mr Wettlaufer: It was moving and you taxed it; it moved again and you taxed it again. If it stops moving —

The Speaker: I've got to say, the member for Kitchener, will you please come to order? You have the enviable, or unenviable, distinction of sitting right next to the Speaker and it can be very distracting. I would ask that you come to order. Thank you.

Mr Marchese: I appreciate the help again, Speaker.

This bill is a bonanza for landlords. I can just see the landlords whispering in the ear of M. Leach, saying: "M. Leach, we've had such a hard time in the past with the NDP. Please give us a break. We need a break from you." Over lunch and over dinner they talked about how M. Leach and this Conservative government would help out, and boy, have they helped out the rich and the powerful in this regard.

Existing landlords can and do make money, contrary to what Mr Leach might be telling you. In the Toronto Star on March 10, 1996, a representative of the commercial real estate broker J.J. Barnecke said: "Apartment buyers can make a return of better than 15% on their equity, and that even with rent control. Apartment buildings have been one of the hottest real estate buys in the greater Toronto area recently."

Minister Leach, J.J. Barnecke says your friends are doing okay, they've been doing well for years, and they've been doing well even under rent control. Why would you create a situation where you would make more money for these fine people? Why would you do that? Is this what it means to become a Canadian now? Are we changing the culture of what it means to be a Canadian? Are we moving so far to the right — you, the Reform Party and the Liberals — that we have nothing left except to accept the inevitable, which is, "We've got to give in to the special, powerful interests because there's nothing we can do"?

Often, I meet people who say: "There's nothing we can do. The big fish are big and the small are small and we can't fight the big fish." That hopelessness and that sense of helplessness is so engrained in our society that they're losing the ability to change the course of where you Tories, Reform and the federal Liberals are taking us.

It is becoming so disillusioning for me individually, and I probably speak for a lot of members of the NDP, that we are changing the threshold, that it's moving more and more to the right where we have less and less respect for those who are affected and hit by the market that cannot and will not protect them. Canadian culture is changing, and it's changing in Ontario probably at the same pace. It is a pitiful thing to witness and to see yourself helpless as these Tories, who are the spokespeople for the rich, the wealthy, the powerful, do their bidding daily in this House. You feel often as if there's nothing you can do to change the course of this country and this province, and it's tough to take.

Mr Leach speaks of balance when he talks. He says: "Balance is what we need. The system is broke and we need to fix it. We need balance, because those poor tenants have had the power for so many years that we need to restore balance to that poor landlord who has lost so much power under the NDP. We need to restore balance because the poor landlords have been losing money and they need to make more." Thankfully the Tories got elected to do their bidding, and they did, and do constantly and will do in the future. The landlords need help, and there are the Tories to come and give them a helping hand, to give them a hand up, as it were, because the poor landlord has been languishing in the years we were in power. Mercifully the Tories have come

by to give them a hand up because they've been doing so poorly over the years. It is pitiful. It is so pitiful to witness.

When I talk about landlords, there are good landlords, there's no doubt about that. And the smaller landlord is probably the best landlord because they take care of their little place.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): Are you one of them?

Mr Marchese: Madame Cunningham, I can't hear you. I wish I could, because I'd stop to listen to your words. I know there are pearls there, but I can't hear you.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I think you should go and find some money for battered women's programs, Madam Minister. That's what you should go and do. That is your task as a minister. Go and do your duty and find money for those programs for battered women. You would do us all a favour. Do that.

The little landlord is not the problem here. The homeowner who rents a little room or a basement is not the problem here. They keep their place, by and large, from my experience, relatively clean, relatively safe. A landlord, Mr Leach, who might own a nice home like yours and rents out a couple of rooms to make ends meet is probably not the problem. We are not talking about that landlord, and your bill, M Leach, doesn't deal with that landlord. We are dealing here with your powerful landlord friends. We're dealing here with those landlords who own buildings where there are more than seven levels or six levels and up. We're talking about that landlord.

When we did our hearings, we had a litany of complaints, mostly from seniors and vulnerable individuals, complaining about their landlords, complaining about lack of maintenance, just complaining about a basic lack of response to basic needs that these people have, and often abuse from some of these landlords as well. That's who we listened to, M Leach. We listened to those organizations that came and said, "We've had a lot of landlords here who don't treat us well." That's what we were talking about. I don't know what Mr Leach is talking about.

1750

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Neither does he.

Mr Marchese: Sometimes I wonder about that. He's so beleaguered these days that I'm not convinced he has the ability to wrap himself around all these issues. There are just too many bills to worry about. He is so beleaguered that he doesn't know what to do. I feel sorry for him every now and then. I do. I know how it must feel to have all these secure ministers, able, no doubt, who have nothing to do, and Mr Leach, day in and day out, comes into this House taking punches from the left, from the right. Poor man. I don't know how he does it. I would have resigned a long time ago. I would have said to Mike Harris: "You do it. If you want somebody to do the dirty work, you do it. I'm not doing it for three years. I've got a good pension, I'm doing all right. I'm not going to go through this hassle to comfort you, Mike Harris. No way." I would have done that. You got the limousine. I understand.

So here we have it. We're back to the tenant protection package, right?

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Are we? Is that where we are?

Mr Marchese: We are. The audience and you need the big picture. You see, what you government on the right want to do is to isolate the issues. What we try to do is to give people the big picture, to see how things are interconnected with you, government, and your actions and how they affect the entire Ontario population.

They talk about decontrolling rents.

Mr Kormos: What the hell does that mean?

Mr Marchese: I know M. Leach knows what it is. Decontrolling rent says that as soon as you move, you're going to be hit with a rent increase.

Mr Kormos: You're going to be whacked again.

Mr Marchese: Whacked seriously. But the minister says you don't have to worry about that, because if you don't move you're okay; if you stay, you're okay. But there are two problems I want to talk to. First, we know from studies that over 70% of people move within a five-year period. Surely he must know that, or ought to know that. Seventy per cent of tenants move within a five-year period. It means that people, for one reason or another, have to leave. That means rent control is gone, because if within five years — unless you do something else to increase the pace — that 70% of people move, you in effect have gotten rid of rent control. That's what you've done. Decontrol means you are allowing your landlord friends to increase rent as soon as they step foot out of that apartment.

Mr Kormos: Their wealthy landlord friends, the big developer landlords.

Mr Marchese: I already mentioned their developer friends.

The other thing is this: If you stay, you're okay, says M. Leach and the other mouthpieces of the right on the other side. But I want to speak to what it means if you are a sitting duck, because that's really what they are. If you stay in the apartment —

Hon Mrs Cunningham: How many more minutes have you got?

Mr Marchese: Madame Cunningham, I know you're enjoying this, but I've got so much time and I've got so much to say. Please.

If you stay in the apartment, this is what it means: You get an automatic 2% guideline increase, which this government has now given away, because you don't even have to do any improvements any more. That 2% increase is something Mr Leach gave away to the landlords. He says: "Boys, you can just have that 2%. Don't worry about maintenance. That's not part of the deal any more." Can you believe that? Mr Speaker, you would understand what I'm saying. It's a giveaway. You don't even have to do maintenance any more. It is so insane.

First, that's 2%, the guideline amount that includes inflation. Then what this government has done is said this: You can spend for capital repairs — under the New Democratic government we allowed for a 3% increase of capital repairs. This government hides the extra per cent they've added. I was trying to listen to M. Leach when he was speaking. He doesn't say that in the beginning.

He finds a different way, some other place, to add that 1%, but it's unclear to anybody who's watching. It's 3% existing and M. Leach and Mike are adding one more per cent for capital repairs.

So we're up 2%, whatever that inflation amount is, plus 4% now, not 3%; that would take it to 6%. And what you fine people have done is that you've added another cost. You've added the cost of utilities, so if you were ever to privatize Ontario Hydro — as I know you want to do; you drool at the thought of it; you haven't been able to do it just yet but you know you want to do that — rates are going to go up, so the poor homeowner is going to be subjected to untold and unforeseen utility increases and property taxes.

Speaker, I know you're enjoying this; I know you are. You've got property taxes now and utilities added on top of the 4% for capital repairs, added on top of the inflation amount. It could, under this government, with the offloading to municipalities, amount to anywhere from a 7.5% to 10% possible rent increase.

Mr Wettlaufer: Where would the capital repairs come from?

The Speaker: The member for Kitchener.

Mr Marchese: M. Leach says, "You don't have to worry if you stay at home any more, because nothing essentially has changed," but it did. I tried to do it as simply as possible so M. Wettlaufer and other members who take an interest in this could see the graph. The injured worker, woman, disabled person, man or woman, the senior are subject to inflation plus the extra percentage in capital repairs plus the addition of — I'm going to read this — "after the addition of property tax increases and utilities increases."

Are people safe? Do people who are tenants feel they have nothing to worry about because M. Leach said, "If you stay at home it's okay"? They have a lot to worry

about, because this act is going to whack tenants who stay at home and is going to whack tenants who are moving from one apartment to the other, called the decontrolling of rents, which is in effect the elimination of rent control.

But because they were advised by Mr Lampert not to eliminate rent controls right away, this government was very clever — it was. They decided to decontrol rents. They thought, "Tenants won't see it and we can still call it tenant protection." They say, "Once you move, yes, you'll get an increase, but then you're subject to the controls again, so everything is okay."

Very clever, I have to admit, because if they had eliminated rent control they would have had a big fight on their hands. As it is, they have masked the bill in such a way that tenants believe everything is okay. That is why I referred to Shakespeare's line, "Fair is foul and foul is fair," because what is fair in the act, in the title at least, is foul, and what is foul within the content of the bill is fair on the outside.

I'm going to have an opportunity to return to the subject tomorrow. It has been a pleasure. I hope the people are watching, because I want those who are watching, hopefully tenants who are watching, to understand we have a big fight on our hands. The enemy is right across from me. They can be fought and they can be defeated.

If they stay at home and pretend everything is okay, we will not be able to tackle the evil of this government, but if they fight back, we can stop the whacking of vulnerable people today. We can do it today if those 33% of the people who are tenants begin the fight to tackle this government.

The Speaker: It being now 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned till 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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First Session, 36th Parliament

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de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 13 May 1997

Mardi 13 mai 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 13 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 13 mai 1997

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): The Minister of Education had no choice but to admit that he made a mistake in drawing up his proposed boundaries for school boards. His boundaries simply made no sense. Even the Tory members on the committee knew that. You simply cannot manage a board efficiently when you have boards that are larger than European countries, which was the case in northern Ontario.

The minister did some damage control and he fixed the worst of the mistakes, but what about the board boundaries that he didn't fix? Why did the minister not hear the concerns in northeastern Ontario? Why has he ignored the very real problems he created for the Hornepayne Board of Education and made their problem no better?

What about the rest of the province? Did the minister not hear the concerns of the London, Middlesex, Elgin and Oxford boards, which are to be amalgamated to become the third-largest district school board in Ontario? Did he not listen to any of the representations that said 300,000 students in the new Toronto board is too many to be manageable? What about the new Lanark, Leeds-Grenville, Prescott-Russell, Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry board, which will be 11,759 kilometres in size and will cover very different and very distant communities? Leo Jordan was assured that board was going to be broken up.

This minister is doing damage control, but he has by no means fixed the mess he has created. Once again we see that the government is not interested in either good policy or good management. They want to ram their agenda through and slow down only when the negative reaction is overwhelming, and sometimes not even then.

HIGHWAY 17

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): This government is determined to download the cost of just about every provincial service it can to the municipal property taxpayers. The Minister of Transportation has repeatedly tried to justify his government's downloading of highway maintenance to municipal taxpayers by arguing that the roads he is transferring to municipal responsibility "no longer serve provincial purposes." In other words, they are really local traffic roads only.

If this is the reasoning the minister uses, how on earth can he justify including Highway 17, or Causley Street,

through the town of Blind River in the list of roads to be downloaded to Blind River taxpayers? Highway 17 is the Trans-Canada Highway. It not only continues to serve provincial purposes, but indeed it serves national purposes. Highway 17 does not bypass Blind River. Causley Street is not a B-designated provincial highway; it is the main provincial highway. In fact, it's the main street for our nation of Canada. Highway 17, or Causley Street, through Blind River is not a local road.

The provincial government was responsible for paying 90% of the maintenance cost under a connecting-link agreement. Now the government has unilaterally cancelled the funding and downloaded 100% of the maintenance costs to Blind River taxpayers, even though Highway 17 continues to serve trans-Canada traffic. This road is not a local road. The provincial government —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

FIRE SERVICE AWARDS

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On April 10, 1997, 17 firefighters from Mississauga were recognized for 25 years of service in Ontario's 135th long service medal investiture.

First awarded in 1971, the Fire Services Long Service Medal is an expression of public appreciation for the dedication and hard work of Ontario's firefighters. In addition to the medal, each recipient receives a citation signed by the fire marshal of Ontario. Both full-time and volunteer firefighters can qualify for the medal.

The medal recipients in Mississauga's fire department were Bill Bayliss, Jerry Brouwer, Gary Denny, Cliff Evans, Leo Ewing, Frank Gabrek, Jim Herridge, Roy Jones, Gord MacCannell, Glen McAlpine, Mark McDonald, Kris Nicholls, Bob Read, Herb Sanderson, Bob Smith, Harold Taylor and Clay Waite.

On behalf of all residents of Mississauga, I am honoured to congratulate these 17 long-serving firefighters for their fortitude, valour and commitment to public service. Every day our firefighters risk their lives in order to protect us. We owe them our deepest admiration and gratitude.

TRANSLATION SERVICES

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): We know how this government is philosophically driven to privatize and outsource every possible service on which Ontarians have come to depend. This is the case even with abundant evidence that delivery of those services will suffer as a result.

Against all reason and common sense, the government refuses to take advantage of the expertise of its own civil

service, which has always provided impeccable service to the people of Ontario. As a direct result, the government is permitting huge errors to be made at considerable cost to the taxpayers of Ontario. One hundred and fifty thousand dollars were spent to print last week's budget documents.

Forty-six thousand of those documents now have to be reprinted by the Ministry of Finance because hundreds of errors in transcription and translation make them virtually useless. These simple errors, that didn't need to happen, prove the government to be incompetent in what should be routine matters. What then can we assume of the bigger issues?

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Aujourd'hui je vais introduire une motion ici à l'Assemblée pour le comité plénier traitant du projet de loi 108. La raison pour laquelle je voudrais introduire cette motion est que le gouvernement de Mike Harris, le gouvernement conservateur de l'Ontario, est en train de faire des changements qui vont donner aux municipalités l'habileté de dresser les contraventions provinciales et fédérales. Le problème, simplement dit, est qu'en faisant le transfert de ces responsabilités aux municipalités, il n'y aura aucune garantie que les services en français seront respectés pour les francophones de la province faisant affaire avec ces questions.

J'introduis cette motion et je demande aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée, et spécialement au gouvernement conservateur, de reconnaître qu'ils ont une responsabilité en tant que gouvernement de faire sûr que tous les francophones de la province soient traités d'une manière égale, faisant affaire avec les services de la province, aux anglophones. Je demande spécialement au ministre délégué aux affaires francophones de l'autre bord de finalement ouvrir ses oreilles, ouvrir son esprit et commencer un peu d'écouter la communauté francophone et prendre sa responsabilité, en tant que ministre délégué aux affaires francophones, de s'assurer à ce que les francophones soient entendus au Cabinet de l'Ontario. Jusqu'à date, je crains beaucoup qu'à ce point-ci nous, francophones, nous trouvons dans une situation très délicate faisant affaire avec ce gouvernement parce que personne ne veut écouter les affaires qui concernent notre communauté.

ERIC HOLMDEN

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I have the honour today of rising to recognize Mr Eric Holmden, a constituent of Northumberland, as the new chair of the Organization of Small Urban Municipalities, commonly known as OSUM.

OSUM is a major section of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which works to address the problems of small urban municipalities. Members of OSUM are those municipalities with populations of less than 50,000 and townships with an urban interest.

Mr Holmden has for many years actively contributed to his community, which includes service club work in the Campbellford Lions Club and also playing a significant role in local politics. He is currently a member of

the Campbellford town council and has served for the past four years on the OSUM executive committee.

I'm sure that everyone in the Ontario Legislature joins with me in congratulating him on his new role as chair of the Organization of Small Urban Municipalities and extending to him best wishes for a most successful year. Mr Holmden's extensive experience will no doubt ensure this accomplishment as he works to represent the concerns of his greater community of the urban municipalities in Ontario.

1340

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY MAILING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My statement is to the Minister of Health. Some very disturbing information has come to my attention regarding a very strange coincidence between the mailing list at the Ministry of Health and the one at the PC Party office.

A few weeks ago, a constituent of mine requested information concerning health care cuts from the Ministry of Health. Some time later, she received from the ministry the publication Putting the Patient First. Shortly thereafter, my constituent, someone who has no party affiliation and has never received direct mail from a political party, received a fund-raising letter from the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

This begs the question: Does the Ontario PC Party have access to mailing lists at the Ministry of Health? I find it to be a very strange coincidence that someone who has never been a member of a political party, never received direct mail from a party, would receive a Tory join-the-party letter only days after making her request for information using the ministry's special 1-800 line.

Of course, what is even more surprising is the fact that the Ontario PC Party would think that anyone concerned about health care would even consider donating to the party that has shut down scores of hospitals across Ontario. Nevertheless, I wonder if the minister would offer this House an explanation as to how these mailing lists could contain such similarities.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): My statement today is on downloading. This Tory government's so-called revenue-neutral strategy for downloading responsibilities is anything but neutral. Communities all across Ontario are struggling to find a solution to the huge mess this government has created. In every riding municipalities and residents are getting more and more divided. Many feel the local municipalities shouldn't be doing the province's dirty work. After all, reducing the number of municipalities is a provincial wish, not a municipal one. Others fear that if they don't participate in an amalgamation study, they won't be in line for the \$1-billion municipal transition fund.

Who is right? There is no way to know because this government is intentionally leaving us in the dark. What we know, though, is that the mega-week announcements will quickly add up to a huge shortfall. For example, Smooth Rock Falls, a municipality in my riding with a

population of 2,100, is facing an estimated \$485,000 shortfall and, to make up the difference, the municipality will have to raise taxes by about 30%.

When Minister Leach is saying that there will be no tax increase because of the downloading — well, I cannot say that he is not telling the truth, because that wouldn't be acceptable in this House. However, I would certainly like to invite —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Cochrane North, it isn't acceptable in the House. That means you can't say it, so you have to withdraw it.

Mr Len Wood: I withdraw that particular comment. But people are very much concerned that Minister Leach —

The Speaker: Thank you.

ROYAL WEEK

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I rise to remind members of the House today that the week before Victoria Day is designated as Royal Week. Organized by the Monarchist League of Canada, Royal Week is punctuated by numerous events that increase our awareness of and appreciation for our constitutional monarchy in Canadian history and contemporary life.

Royal Week culminates on Victoria Day, which, this year, commemorates the 178th anniversary of the birthday of Queen Victoria and the 71st birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of Canada. In addition, we mark the 50th wedding anniversary of the Queen and Prince Philip. We are also celebrating 500 years of the monarchy in Canada with the arrival of Giovanni Caboto here in 1497, an anniversary which the Queen herself will honour with her presence among us in June.

The Queen's birthday parade in Toronto, the largest outside of Britain, is ably run by the Ontario chairman of the Monarchist League, Gary Toffoli. Joining me in the House today is the Dominion vice-chairman, Arthur Bousfield. On behalf of the government of Ontario, I congratulate you, Mr Bousfield, and all of your members for your excellent work.

I invite all my colleagues in the House to join so many other Canadians on Victoria Day in celebrating our royal heritage and in renewing our pledge of loyalty to our sovereign. God save the Queen.

ANNUAL REPORT

INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House I have today laid upon the table the 1996 annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier and has to do with Ipperwash. We are tabling today some new evidence of government

interference in the OPP operation at Ipperwash. The Premier has said on several occasions that the OPP operated with no government input, no direction or advice, that the OPP handled Ipperwash all on their own.

We now have a transcript between the commanding officer, Mr Linton, and his superior officer, the transcript taken about an hour and a half before the fatal shooting. It shows that the government, for whatever reason, decided to overrule the OPP wishes and to direct them on action.

Here is one quote from this transcript. The superintendent, Parkin, is saying, "It was our intention to get a certain type of injunction; however, they," the government, "went from that, that regular type of injunction to the emergency type which, you know, isn't really in our favour." He went on to say, "We" the OPP "want a little bit more time."

Premier, this is clear evidence of the government interference in the OPP operation.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): We did not interfere. Those are matters for the Attorney General and the OPP to work out. We accepted their advice and sought an injunction.

Mr Phillips: The evidence shows different. As I say, it's a transcript from the commanding officer indicating the OPP wanted to do one thing and the government directed otherwise.

I want to go on in the transcript to further evidence of the government interference in the OPP operation. Recognize, again, this was a government that had been in office for two months. The OPP clearly worried about this government. Rather than a hands-off approach, it is clear the OPP felt that they were under a microscope from the government.

Another quote from the superintendent. He goes on to say, "There was a rumour that was circulated, not from the OPP but from other government officials hanging around the OPP command post." He then says, "That rumour got to Queen's Park and then the Deputy Solicitor General's office, so there was concern that, you know, maybe we weren't doing the right thing." In other words, the superintendent is saying the government doesn't feel they're doing the right thing.

If the government and the cabinet were taking a hands-off approach, why would the commanding officer feel that, at the Deputy Solicitor General level, there was concern that maybe the OPP —

Hon Mr Harris: I can't speak for rumours at the staff level.

Mr Phillips: None of this is rumour. I am prepared to table today the transcript. None of this is rumour. This is all the OPP commanding officer and his superior. The issue at Ipperwash is clear to us. This was the first incident between your new government and the first nations. It was clear that this was going to be the way that you determined and defined how you dealt with the first nations. Unfortunately, it all got completely out of hand, Premier, and now you, personally, have to live with that. Ontario has a right to know the government's involvement in this very sad episode. Will you commit today to a public inquiry so all of Ontario can know exactly what happened that day?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member is well aware that in opposition you can be irresponsible, quote rumours and draw innuendo from wherever you are. In government, unfortunately, you actually have to be responsible and you have to understand the justice system following its course. As I have said, the legal advice I have is that we should await the conclusion of those cases before taking any decision on inquiry.

1350

RENT REGULATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Minister, yesterday we began the debate on your bill to eliminate tenant protection in Ontario, the tenant rejection legislation in Ontario. In the debate yesterday you suggested to this House that you're maintaining a system of rent control, that there's protection of rent control. Yet we have been faced in this House and in other places with quotes from you to the effect of — I quote directly from a speech to the Ontario Home Builders' Association: "I've said it before and I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go."

Yesterday you said you're protecting tenants; that there will be rent control. And then on October 3, 1995, in this Legislature you said to the member across, "Yes, eventually we will be eliminating rent control." Then on May 13, 1996, in this House you said, "We will be eliminating rent control." Which is it, Minister? Have you protected tenants and kept rent control or have you eliminated it with Bill 96?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Rent control will be maintained for anyone remaining in their existing unit. When the tenant moves, the landlord would have the ability to negotiate a new rent with a new tenant. So rent control remains from that aspect. When the new tenant moves in, the rent control goes back on, as the member will know.

However, on new construction, on new buildings that will be put up as a result of this legislation and other moves this government is making, new buildings will be exempt from rent control. From a standpoint of rent control being off any rental accommodation, that is correct. So will rent control go? Yes, rent control will go off any new construction forever. Will rent control remain to protect existing tenants? Yes, it will.

Mr Duncan: Minister, you are explaining nothing but a smokescreen to remove every protection that tenants in the province of Ontario have. You have a flawed piece of legislation. You have a piece of legislation that doesn't address any of the issues you say you're addressing. Yesterday in this House you said that your bill will increase investment in housing in Ontario.

I'd like to quote from the Lampert report, your own report, which says: "The majority of landlords and landlord groups that appeared before the committee concur: Scrapping rent controls alone will not encourage the building of new rental stock.... The New Directions policy will not create new housing."

You have said you're protecting tenants, that you're going to create investment, yet in your own words you're

eliminating rent control. In the words of every major group in this province that develops affordable housing, there will be no new housing stock. Will you admit now that you're not only not protecting tenants, you're rejecting tenants and doing nothing for affordable housing?

Hon Mr Leach: Nothing could be further from the truth. We are protecting tenants, as we said. The existing rent control formula, the rent control formula that was developed by the previous government, will remain in place. That is a 2.8% rent cap this year, as long as they remain in their existing accommodation. Once a tenant moves, the landlord would have the ability to negotiate a new rent with a new tenant, and as I said, on any new construction there will be no rent controls.

You're absolutely right: Will the change in the Rent Control Act promote new construction? By itself, it will not. But with all the other favourable steps this government has taken, it will.

Mr Duncan: We would submit that the only formula in this bill is a formula to intimidate tenants and force them out of their homes or jack up their rents so high that they can no longer afford to live there. By government's own statistics, in this province, particularly in our large urban centres, many more people pay more than 30% of their income than can afford to. Minister, your formula is a formula for leaving them unprotected. Your bill will not — not — create investment.

How do you propose to this House and to the vulnerable tenants in this province that you will protect their interests once there's no rent control? Many groups have said, Lampert included, that the market will not bear the current rental rates, that rents can go up as much as 3000%. Laugh, Minister; it's your report that said that.

Why don't you admit your bill is flawed, that you're abandoning tenants, and get back on track in this House with a bill that will protect tenants in this city and right across Ontario?

Hon Mr Leach: I do find that quite humorous, to say that rents are going to go up 3000%. Get serious and get real. If you want to talk about it, the Todd report found that most rent control units are close to market levels right now. Keeping rents artificially controlled protects units, not tenants. We want to protect tenants.

Now he's going to say it affects low-income people. Let's quote Mr John Sewell, that leader of democracy, who said: "Many people assume that rent control is there to protect lower-income tenants in the units they rent. It's the upper-income tenants who get the most benefit from rent control."

The changes we're making in rent control will protect tenants. It will also generate investment in new buildings. It's something that has been long overdue. Your party recommended that the same changes, or many of the same changes, to the rent control bill take place in your little red book.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. In Tuesday's budget, the Minister of Health claimed that the Conservative govern-

ment is spending more on patient care. He tried to pass off the cost of laying off nurses and the cost of shutting down hospitals as funding for patient care. On the same day, he axed the Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel, the body which is supposed to help laid-off health care workers find new work in the health care system. On Thursday we found out that you actually cut patient care in this province in order to find the money to pay for the physicians' agreement.

Minister, with the patient care budget being cut and with 11,000 health care workers losing their jobs in the year, why did you do away with the Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): That's the most bizarre question in the world. First of all, he gives no example of cutting patient care, but he says money to doctors so they can look after patients isn't patient care. OHIP money is patient care. Doctors use the money to render services to patients. They're a significant part of the health care system — news over there.

With respect to HSTAP, there's not one reason in the world why HSTAP should dissolve given that we've asked it to move to highest quality, best price and be one of the many brokers out there that hospitals can use part as of this \$2 billion extra money from the treasury to help them restructure. Highest quality, best price. If HSTAP is as good as they're telling you they are, as good as they're telling me they are, there's not one reason in the world why they shouldn't continue to be in business.

Mr Hampton: The minister continues to try to miss the point, and the point is this: There is no new money in the health care system for patient care. You're taking money from elsewhere in the system and using it to pay for the physicians' settlement. There is no new money; a significant portion of that money will come from other areas of the ministry which would have devoted their funding to patient care.

You can't use money required to lay off nurses for patient care, you can't use money required to shut hospitals for patient care, and you can't use money required to increase doctors' incomes for patient care. The money can only be used once; it can't be recycled three times.

The point is that out of all this, out of all your cuts, literally thousands of health care workers are losing their jobs. You've also done away with the one body that could connect laid-off health care workers with new opportunities in the community sector or elsewhere. How are you going to coordinate this? How are laid-off health care workers going to find new jobs elsewhere in health care when you've destroyed the body that was supposed to do that?

1400

Hon Mr Wilson: I agree with the honourable member that we're going through a period where the health care workers in this province, like other provinces, and like Britain and Australia and the rest of the world, need our understanding, but to give a monopoly to one agency called the Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel is an insult to every community college in this province, every university, every educational institution, every

private sector training group, every consulting firm that offers retraining and educational services in this province.

To give a monopoly to one agency might have been your style of government, for whatever reasons you had, but this government, when there's \$2 billion to be spent on restructuring above the new level of health care of \$17.8 billion — a record for this province to be spent on patient services. The fact is that we're saying to HSTAP, "There's not one reason you can't become as competitive as community colleges, as competitive as private sector agencies, to help broker retraining services in this province."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Minister, the issue here is the coordination and the registry of jobs. That's the important issue. Last month alone 1,134 health care workers were laid off from hospitals in Ontario, and over 10,000 have been laid off during the last year because of your budget cuts and because you made hospitals put them in place before you got to restructuring. We're talking about real people here, people like Debbie Linton from Windsor, who only agreed to her severance package because she was assured that HSTAP would be there.

These employees need the job registry. They need a coordinated effort to find them jobs in the other sectors that are opening as a result of restructuring. What you've done is to destroy their opportunities. They want to know where the retraining money is in your restructuring funds. They want to know where the coordination is and where the registry is going to be. They want to know, do you really have a plan or are you just flying by the seat of your pants in terms of this, the way you are with everything else in health care?

Hon Mr Wilson: We're working very closely with the Ontario Hospital Association to make sure there isn't just one agency that 208 hospitals have to buy their services from, but that everybody else who is in this business has an opportunity —

Mrs Boyd: The employers; give it to the employers.

Hon Mr Wilson: I don't think one agency can handle the hundreds of millions' of dollars worth of retraining and educational costs —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Wilson: If HSTAP takes the opportunity to compete with all the other agencies out there, there's no reason it wouldn't be the number one choice of hospitals. We're talking about freedom of choice for hospitals to facilitate their employees moving to the new jobs being created in health care as the system expands and as we put new money into the system.

The registry, I agree with the honourable member, is an important part. We've already said that will be preserved. It doesn't have to be just in the hands of one agency. There are other ways to ensure we have a province-wide registry so that all people have access to it.

TRUCKING SAFETY

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Premier. On February 21 your Minister of

Transportation said that the problem of wheels flying off trucks and killing people was "a very serious problem that shows no signs of improving and one that can't wait any longer." He said, "The dramatic increase in truck wheel separations and the seriousness of this offence has prompted me to move forward on this matter alone."

That was February 21. The minister then introduced a truck safety bill on Monday, February 24, saying he wanted it passed by Thursday, February 27. You have now spent the last three and a half months sitting on that bill while the wheels keep flying off trucks.

Premier, you've got a majority. You ram legislation through this House all the time. Can you tell us why in February truck safety was a big priority for your government and now, all of a sudden, it doesn't matter? Where's your bill?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I am sure the minister would like a chance to respond, or perhaps the House leader. But let me tell you something on behalf of this government and this cabinet and this caucus and this minister. Nobody has taken a more aggressive stance than this minister has on truck safety, leading Canada, leading jurisdictions, I would argue, across North America. Nobody has done more than he has done.

Yes, there was a window where we could have had that bill debated. Both opposition parties, as I recall, wanted hearings. Both wanted hearings. Now one has said they don't want hearings and the other has said they do. But there was a window in the previous session, even though that session was for other purposes, to deal with one part of an extensive, comprehensive truck bill. You turned that down. You refused that offer.

Now we are faced with that bill, plus a comprehensive bill to be introduced shortly that will require hearings, and we accept that process. So this bill will become law when —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much, Premier.

Mr Hampton: We just got an admission from the Premier that all the nonsense, all the bragging back in February is just that and nothing more: a bunch of hot air. You came forward with a half-baked bill, you and the minister went out and told everyone about how much you care about truck safety, and you've done nothing, absolutely nothing. You've had three and a half months when you could have brought this bill forward and had it passed, and you've done absolutely nothing about it. It was a bunch of hot air we heard.

I am going to give you another chance, Premier. We'll debate the bill today. We'll debate the bill tomorrow. You bring this legislation in and we'll debate it and we'll get it through the House. If you care about truck safety, bring it in the House now. Bring it in today.

Hon Mr Harris: I want to say, on behalf of the minister and the House leader, that you had a chance to move forward. You had a chance to work with us, to work in cooperation, to do one piece of the truck safety bill, and you refused it at that time. Let me say I'm not imputing motive. I think your argument at the time was that it needed hearings, needed thought.

You've called it a half-baked bill. I don't think it's a half-baked bill; I think it's a very serious bill, and I don't

know why you would refer to it as half-baked. But you asked for hearings and we accepted that advice. We said, "Yes, we will have hearings."

Interjections.

The Speaker: I would ask the opposition members to come to order. The leader of the third party and the member for Cochrane North, please come to order. Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: You asked for hearings. This is not a government that jams through any legislation. If you want hearings, we have hearings. If you want debate, we have debate. You're getting your way.

1410

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: As I indicated, and I think the record will show, we've probably had more hearings and more debate on legislation than any other government on record. But I want to say this: We had two sessions with two breaks. We had the session of January, February and March, and then we had the spring session. We have two truck safety bills. We had an opportunity to separate them out. We lost that opportunity — for whatever reason; you wanted hearings then — but we still have an opportunity and time we believe to debate one comprehensive truck safety bill. This bill will be included in it as we were not able to get it through in the last session, and we will have hearings as you wish.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): The Premier is trying to tell us his is a government that doesn't jam things through this House. We're starting to feel like burnt toast, you've jammed so much stuff through this House. Come on, give your head a shake. We've seen you on Bill 103, we've seen you on Bill 26, we've seen you on Bill 7, we've seen you on a whole bunch of legislation hijack democracy in this House and jam all —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: Listen, Premier, you're the government. You're the person who decides when legislation gets called in this House. That's why you were elected. That's the majority you have. I'm going to ask you once again, really simply, the same question I asked the Minister of Transportation yesterday. We asked on Thursday and we asked yesterday for unanimous consent to deal with the legislation forthwith. Will you accept that we have unanimous consent in order to deal with this very important legislation today?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the voters in 1995 concurred with the former Premier's daughter that you were toast and why you were toast, and it's the policies that you brought in over the previous four and a half years that explain why you as a government are toast.

Secondly, let me say this: We had a legislative window to do two truck safety bills this spring, one in the first session, one in the second. We lost that opportunity. We regret that. Clearly, for whatever reason — and I accept the fact that you wanted hearings on it — your leader thinks it was a half-baked bill. Your leader says it's a half-baked bill. He didn't like it and you wanted hearings on it. That's fine. Now we will have hearings on that and we will have hearings on a more comprehensive truck safety bill, and we will do that in this session. That will

be introduced and debated at that time. That's a logical way to deal with legislation. I thank you for your offer of support to deal with the large bill.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is to the Premier as well, because he's the person with the ultimate power in the government. In the past several months, for instance, people have been killed or injured on the highways of this province by flying truck wheels. In February, you will recall, with a good deal of bluster and fanfare, your Minister of Transportation called that press conference and said he wanted to proceed with legislation to deal with the matter.

At every House leaders' meeting I have brought forward the issue of Bill 125 and asked the government when it wished to deal with the legislation dealing with truck safety. Your government has refused to call the bill for processing.

Today you want to debate a bill ending rent control in Ontario, much to the distress of seniors in this province and other vulnerable people. You have three years left to kill rent control. The truck wheels can kill people today, any hour, any minute of any day.

Premier, you have an undertaking from both opposition parties, a public undertaking, that this bill will pass extremely quickly. Will you call this bill today for consideration and passage in this House?

Hon Mr Harris: Aside from the fact that most agreements we've negotiated as House leaders have not been lived up to by one party or another, and I can appreciate from the Liberal viewpoint that it's mostly been the New Democratic Party, what we are interested in now, having lost the window for one piece of truck safety, is dealing with the comprehensive bill. That will be introduced shortly. I accept your commitment to deal with the whole bill in a comprehensive way. I accept, as the House leader and the minister have, your desire to have hearings. We will do that. In the meantime, let's get on with getting construction going, let's get on with protection for tenants, let's get on with some of the other legislation. We will deal with truck safety, as we planned to do, this session.

Mr Bradley: Premier, clearly your Minister of Transportation is embarrassed. He's forced to make up stories in the scrum outside. He's forced to give less-than-desirable answers in this House. Clearly he wants to proceed with this legislation. Every party in this House wants to proceed with this legislation. People are beginning to believe that some powerful interests opposed to this legislation have gotten to you and you are now preventing the Minister of Transportation from proceeding with this bill.

Premier, people could be killed on the highway today, any hour, any minute of this day. This is a danger to the people of this province. The opposition is prepared to pass this bill today in the Legislative Assembly, and yet you for some reason seem to want to withdraw that bill, to not proceed with that bill, but to move forward with other legislation that you have three years to pass. Premier, will you follow what the member for Windsor-Walkerville has suggested yesterday, that we proceed with this bill immediately, that we pass this bill and that we deal with truck safety in this province in the interests of all parties and all people in this province?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me say this: You had 10 years, five years in your party, five years in that party, when you did absolutely nothing. You have private members' hour where you refuse to bring anything forward. You had an opportunity in the last session. You had an opportunity to bring it forward and deal with it. You had an opportunity to deal with it quickly. You refused. You said you wanted hearings; we said: "Yes. We understand why you like hearings. We know that." So now we're here with one session and we have two bills. This isn't the only bill. We have two bills brought forward by probably one of the most progressive ministers of transportation, certainly in the last 11 or 12 years around this province.

We are asking for your cooperation for this bill. We are asking for your cooperation with the comprehensive bill that will contain this. We are asking for your cooperation with the hearings. We're asking to get this legislation through the Legislature and on with it this spring. But don't come back here after —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. New question.
1420

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. The national forum on health, the Premier's Council on Health, Well-being and Social Justice and countless other research studies have presented compelling evidence that the number one determinant for poor health is poverty.

I was sorry you weren't in the press room this morning to hear the Street Nurses Network relate real-life cases concerning seniors, the disabled, single-parent families and youth, showing how your government's cuts to social assistance, subsidized child care, affordable housing, addiction services and home care services are plunging those unfortunate people into increasingly poor health. Minister, these cases illustrate that your government's policies are making the health status of vulnerable people more and more precarious and the costs of your policies are shifting social costs into the health system.

You tell us all the time that you want to improve the health system. How committed are you to improving the health of individual Ontarians, not just the efficiency of the health system?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): One of the greatest determinants of health is the opportunity for employment and to have a job. This government's record is extremely good in that area and we're heading to more jobs for the people of Ontario. Second, we've managed to do that in a way by protecting priorities, the priorities we took to the people in the election in 1995, and we have stuck to those priorities and exceeded our funding levels in health care.

You left this health care budget at \$17.4 billion. We're up to \$17.8 billion in operating dollars and \$2 billion more to get us through the restructuring and fully protect and enhance patient services. Today, for example, we announced \$25.1 million — Mr Palladini and I were up at Villa Colombo — for community-based services. That brings up to \$54 million in home care services in the last 20 months, new money put into the home care services,

much of what the people at the press conference for street people talked about today.

The fact of the matter is that we're putting unprecedented new money into expanded services in Metro Toronto and right across the province. Our reinvestment strategy is working, and rather than talking about —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Mrs Boyd: That is scant comfort to the people we heard about this morning: the elderly woman who's all alone and confined to bed who gets two hours of service a day; the native homeless man who can get expensive acute care in a hospital when he self-mutilates, because of the pain in his background, and gets expensive addiction counselling when he's in desperate straits, but can't find a place to live and can't get enough food to eat; or about street youth whose potential is disappearing.

One of the nurses made a very clear comment, and I think she's right. She said: "Nowhere is the absurdity of Band-Aid approaches better exemplified than in this government's approach. Real common sense tells you that living in poverty and fear and isolation is hardly compatible with being healthy."

Minister, the policies of all these other ministers are impacting on your ministry. Will you commit today to look at these suggestions from the Street Nurses Network which tell you that your job is not just to improve the efficiency of the health system but to work with these other ministers to improve the determinants of health.

Hon Mr Wilson: If the honourable member truly believed in the five determinants of health, then I ask the honourable member, why did you rack up a \$100-billion debt in this province which restrains the ability of government to respond?

We've set priorities. Other governments threw up their hands when they were faced with such problems. They threw up their hands. We said, "No, we'll set priorities, we'll get the books in order and at the same time we'll pump more money into health care," and that's what we're doing.

The previous government —

Mrs Boyd: You've abandoned the vulnerable.

Hon Mr Wilson: I don't need any lectures from this member. They kept talking about \$23.5 million in a community investment fund. You didn't flow one dollar to help mental health services. We flowed the \$23.5 million. It's all gone out now and there are new case management services —

Mrs Boyd: It was announced two years ago.

Hon Mr Wilson: Yes, you did a great job of announcing it; you didn't flow one dollar, not one single dollar.

How can you have a \$100-billion debt in the province and not spend any new money on community mental health, no beefing up of home care services, not one new nursing home bed added to the system in 10 years? You tell me what you did with all the money when you racked up \$100 billion. It sure didn't go into services for people.

BOOK PUBLISHING

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Last Tuesday in the budget the Minister of Finance

announced a number of tax credit and tax reduction programs; in fact, there were 20. One of the programs he announced was a specific tax credit program for the book publishing industry. Minister, will you share with the House and the people of Ontario the reasons for the creation of this program?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Thank you to the member for Hamilton Mountain for his question. The budget was really about government doing business differently. It's about leaving more money in the hands of the creative entrepreneurs. They're the ones who create the jobs and develop new talent, not government. The previous loan guarantee program for book publishing simply fostered dependence and a sense of entitlement in government. It didn't make economic sense to provide loan guarantees to companies and then turn around and provide them with additional grants to pay the interest on those guarantees.

What Mr Eves's program will do, and what his announcement last week said, is it will reward those publishers who invest their money in the development of first-time Canadian authors. That's good sense; that creates jobs.

Mr Pettit: I'm always pleased and I know the people of Hamilton Mountain are always pleased to know that taxpayers' money is being used more wisely, especially after the fiscal farces performed by the two previous governments.

Minister, can you explain to the House some of the expected results of this initiative and some of the reaction you have received from the publishing industry?

Hon Ms Mushinski: We expect that the tax credit announcement will encourage 60 to 70 Canadian-owned, Ontario-based publishing firms to publish the work of about 300 first-time Canadian authors this year. In fact, Margie Wolfe, who is the president of the Organization of Book Publishers of Ontario, said: "It will help us to introduce the next generation of Margaret Atwoods and Michael Ondaatjes to Canadians and readers throughout the world." Jack Stoddart, the president of the Association of Canadian Publishers, said about the budget, "The tone of the speech indicated that they're looking to create new industries and the new credits should generate new publishing business in the province."

That's what Mr Eves's budget was all about, creating new business, creating new jobs.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Health and it concerns new policy that the finance minister has been making in east Parry Sound. I'm delighted to report to the health minister that in recent days I've been to that wonderful community of Burk's Falls. I'm here to proclaim the good news of Burk's Falls, where he, Jim Wilson, and more importantly his colleague the Minister of Finance, the local member, Ernie Eves, have reopened Burk's Falls Hospital. I'm delighted. I'm absolutely delighted that in the realm of the Minister of Finance we have a very clear exception to the hospitals policy that's been imposed on the rest of us in Ontario.

My question is, having proclaimed the good news of Burk's Falls, will the people in Arnprior and Barry's Bay, in Winchester and Walkerville, in Petrolia and Meaford, have the benefit of the same kind of small-hospital policy that you, and more importantly your colleague the number two revolutionary, Ernie Eves, have happily applied to the east Parry Sound community health centre? 1430

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I've already answered this question many times. Burk's Falls, prior to the NDP coming to office, and while your government was in office, Mr Conway, had 15 beds. It was considered a small hospital. It's still on the books today as a small hospital except the NDP took all the beds away.

The case has been made. There was a community task force put together in 1995-96, I believe. It once again, for the umpteenth time, recommended that half a dozen beds should be back into that community to service people who have no other real alternatives. The doctors asked for it and the task force asked for it, so we're simply putting six — they're not full-fledged hospital beds; they're a transitional type bed — back into Burk's Falls. It makes good sense for rural Ontario.

Mr Conway: I've read the answer you provided two weeks ago and let me tell you, I'm not allowed by parliamentary rules to tell you what I thought about your answer to Ms Boyd. I've been to Burk's Falls in recent days. I know exactly what you and the Minister of Finance have done. I, for one, applaud the local member because he told you and your Health Services Restructuring Commission to go to hell.

What I want to know on behalf of the people in Barry's Bay and Arnprior, and yes, in Petrolia and Walkerton and Meaford and Port Colborne and all of those other small hospitals and their communities, are they going to be allowed the kind of treatment that has saved Burk's Falls Hospital?

Ernie Eves has said he's not going to accept your process and your policy, not just in terms of small hospitals in east Parry Sound, but I might add in home care policy. He told you where to go with your CCAC in Parry Sound, and he was right there too. So for all those other small communities from Arnprior to Petrolia, from Barry's Bay to Meaford, it's Burk's Falls or bust. Will they get the same treatment from you and your pal the Minister of Finance?

Hon Mr Wilson: No area of the province is outside the jurisdiction of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. That is very clear in the law.

Secondly, this member has a lot of gall. His government, when they were in office, sent 34 district health councils out there to do some 60 studies with absolutely no benchmarks, no policy, no policy guidelines, for rural Ontario, so no wonder the NDP came in and closed the hospitals and took all the beds out of Burk's Falls, because there was no rural health care policy.

For the first time we have set up an expert panel. That policy will be ready soon and the commission and others looking at voluntary restructuring, as we see in parts of the province, will for the first time have some benchmarks, some policy guidelines, and we won't have DHCs out there in 34 different places doing 34 different things.

That's good news for rural Ontario, it's good news for Burk's Falls and it's good news for —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. New question.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Following up to the Minister of Health from the previous question, I would like to ask the minister, is he aware — I suppose he is — that Women's College Hospital released its response to the health sector restructuring commission yesterday? Its response illustrates once again the flexibility this institution is willing to bring to the issues posed by your government's cost-cutting machine.

Women's College Hospital has put forth yet another possible solution, and it's a good one, to maintain a critical focus on women's health which achieves the cost savings you require.

Minister, will you intervene, like you have for the Minister of Finance, like you have for rural areas, like you have for Montfort Hospital, and save Women's College Hospital?

Hon Mr Wilson: Mr Speaker, the honourable member would be asking the honourable member to break the law, and you should rule that out of order. That is not allowed in a Parliament. You are not allowed to coerce another member into breaking the law. The law is clear that this commission is at arm's length.

Women's College has put forward — I saw the media reports too; I don't have a copy of their proposal, but they're welcome to send me a copy of their proposal. Women's College is doing what it should be doing during this period of time, along with other hospitals. It's responding to the interim direction from the commission and the commission will make the final determination.

Ms Churley: I wonder if the minister is going to send in the police and have me arrested today for breaking the law, for asking the minister to defend women's health in Ontario. That's what I ask the minister to do today, and you can no longer hide behind this commission. More and more evidence is showing up every day about that. You have intervened all over the place, I think for good reason. The same principles apply here.

Minister, we are talking about women's health, and women make up 52% of the population. The evidence is there right in front of you. There are differences in drug treatment, diagnosis of cardiovascular disease and a treatment related specifically to gender. These differences have been ignored far too long by the medical community. You now have the potential, if you let the commission go ahead with this, to destroy the potential for further research and clinical procedures as have been pioneered by Women's College Hospital.

Minister, will you — and I ask you again; I am not breaking the law — save Women's College Hospital? Because the women of this province will not put up with your —

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Wilson: The premise I believe of the honourable member's question is — she asked the question, "What have you done for women's health?" Well, the question could be asked, "What did you do for women's health?"

The honourable finance minister announced last week \$6 million for a new women's health institute. That

grows to \$10 million. It's what the interim recommendations of the commission have recommended. Those are significantly more research dollars for women's health programs than have ever been put in place in this province or any other jurisdiction in Canada.

On March 8 the vice-president of research at the University of Toronto, who is cross-appointed to Women's College, said, "If the province accepts Thursday's recommendation by the Health Services Restructuring Commission to earmark \$8 million to \$10 million annually for research on women's health issues it would represent a significant improvement in the area." So said Cecil Yip, vice-dean of research in the school's medical facility.

"You are seeing an expansion in terms of research on women's health," Yip said. "It's about five times the amount they have ongoing there at Women's College right now. It will be really boosted" —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): My question is to the minister responsible for natural resources. Recently, at the 17th annual Kiwanis live release walleye derby —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Riverdale, come to order, please. Member for Riverdale, I warn you to come to order.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have to take the chair.

The Speaker: Then you'd better come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Is nothing sacred? That's what I ask. Member for Quinte.

Mr Rollins: Recently, the 17th annual Kiwanis rural walleye live release fishing derby was held in my riding in the beautiful Bay of Quinte. Despite the brutal weather, over 5,000 people registered for that weekend. Anglers in that area of the sports fishermen play a significant role in the economy of my riding. Could you please tell me, Minister, what you're doing with the fees you're collecting from the many anglers in the Quinte area?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I'd like to thank the member for Quinte for the question. It is an important question. But first, I'd like to express our appreciation to the tournament organizers. We're pleased they had such a successful tournament, enjoying the fishing opportunities in Quinte.

1440

The member raised a good question that for years anglers and others have asked, that the dollars they spend for licences and other fees go towards wildlife and natural resource management and fishery improvement in this province. Past governments have said this was impossible. As you know, the Mike Harris government has made it possible. They've created a special purpose account to collect all the fishing fees to be used for fish and wildlife management inside the province. This was a commitment we made in the 1995 election and I am

pleased to say that we've honoured it and it's working quite well.

Mr Rollins: I know that you collect significant revenues from these fishing and hunting fees. What types of programs are you funding with these dollars?

Hon Mr Hodgson: It's very important that we hear from people who are involved in the outdoors, the people who hunt and fish. For that reason, I created the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board comprising 11 individuals throughout the province to give advice on how this money should be put to good use and how we can improve our programs within the Ministry of Natural Resources.

We've already put the money to good use and a number of their recommendations have been followed, including putting in more money than ever in the province's history to the community fisheries involvement program, commonly referred to as CFIP, and the community wildlife involvement program, referred to as CWIP. These programs support dedicated individuals and groups who are active in areas such as fish culturing, stocking projects, spawning bed restorations and stream projects. We've also increased the stocking of chinook salmon and rainbow trout in Lake Ontario and have re-established the Ontario coho program, which was cancelled back in 1991.

We are active in a number of other areas, as well as working to promote a new interest in fishing and conservation throughout Ontario. I thank you very much for the opportunity to inform the House.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health, although with some trepidation because I really would rather have the Minister of Finance, who seems to be more effective in terms of dealing with health matters in this province.

I'd like to ask you, Minister, about your record as the putative Minister of Health, particularly towards the people who work in the health system in this province. In your actions in enacting the Harris hospital cuts, another \$435 million this year, you personally, abetted by the Premier, have laid off thousands of nurses and health care workers. Now, after having done that, you've taken away the only labour adjustment program that they have.

Today, you need to stand in your place and explain to Ontarians how you are disrespecting nurses. Right in Nurses Week, you've taken away the one labour adjustment program they have. You've stolen that from them. You need to stand in your place today and say how much money you are going to put towards retraining, which you guarantee, and who the nurses and the health care workers that you've unemployed, that you've sent pink slips to, turn to for help.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): It's interesting. I started Nurses Week by having a round table with the nursing associations in this province, hosted Monday morning by the registered nurses' association. They presented me with a framed poster commemorating Nurses Week and we had nothing but a positive hour and a half together, including a discussion on HSTAP.

They agreed that there shouldn't be one monopoly, that with the amount of change that is occurring in the system there should be a number of avenues open for both employers and employees to receive these benefits and the retraining allowances and yes, a central registry.

I don't know where the honourable member is making up these fears. They are not coming from the registered nurses' association, the nursing home association, the non-profit homes association. I will get the list of the 15 or 16 groups represented. This morning I met with region 3 of the Ontario Hospital Association, which is all of the Metro Toronto hospitals, at a downtown hotel — a packed room, extremely positive. They were very appreciative of the finance minister's and the Premier's understanding in terms of setting aside huge amounts of money for restructuring.

Mr Kennedy: It's almost with regret that I follow up that question because that is such a sad answer in the face of the concerns of people in this province. It doesn't in the least start to address what people like Phil Walke are feeling. Mr Walke accepted a severance deal on March 26 from Sick Kids' Hospital. Sick Kids' Hospital is a hospital on which you personally enacted a Harris hospital cut of \$26 million. You precipitated his unemployment. He was given this letter and in this letter it said he would have access to a labour adjustment program, which you've just cancelled.

When he tried to find out about what to do next, he called your office. Your office didn't know what the plan was and told him to contact the OHA. The OHA didn't know what the plan was and told him to call your office.

Mr Walke and 2,000 people are stuck in the system now, but more important to the people of Ontario, they want to know why you're disrespecting nurses and other health care professionals. What are you going to do for them?

Hon Mr Wilson: The Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel has every ability in the world to stay in the business it's in today. It has to recognize that there are other agencies out there. It has to recognize that many of the large hospitals are equipped to purchase these services directly from community colleges and they don't need to spend money on middlemen or middle layers of bureaucracy. They're quite efficient. They know what their employees want and need. They're closest to their employees. They'll work with their employees. The hospitals can do that very directly. Hospitals are very large institutions. A lot of them don't need a broker to access services.

To have a monopoly is never healthy. Hospitals have said that. The nursing home association has said that. All of the contracts, all of the letters of intent that are held by people from HSTAP will be —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent for the government to call forward Bill 125 so that we can debate this very important legislation today.

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane South is seeking unanimous consent to call forward Bill 125 for debate today. Agreed? No. I heard a no.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I move that Mr Fox and Mr Young exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business; and that the House will commence at 11 am on Thursday, May 15, to discuss ballot item number 77 only.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Dispense? Carried.

PETITIONS

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): "Whereas improper catch and release methods of sport fishing have long-lasting effects on any given body of water; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is not encouraging proper management of fish stocks by allowing netting during spawning season, which destroys spawning beds; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is not encouraging proper management of fish stocks by allowing any size of fish to be retained; and

"Whereas sport fishing of Lancaster perch and other breeds in the greater Cornwall area greatly benefit local tourism, fishing and the overall economy and will continue to do so if managed properly;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Ministry of Natural Resources to impose a seven-inch size limit on fish allowed to be kept, not allow netting during spawning season and also to reopen closed provincial parks in the area to encourage tourism and ensure vibrant long-term sport fishing in our area of eastern Ontario."

I fully agree with this petition and I affix my signature to this petition.

RENT REGULATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to take away the protections of the Rent Control Act; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to allow a landlord to charge a tenant who moves into an apartment whatever the landlord can get away with; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to raise the limit of how high rents can increase for all tenants; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to make it easier to demolish or convert existing affordable rental housing; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to take away the rent freeze which has been successful in forcing some landlords to repair their buildings;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to keep the existing rent laws which provide true protection for tenants in place."

I will affix my name to this petition.

1450

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from Pauline Johnston from the Grey Women Teachers' Association.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control of schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and failure to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of the province of Ontario."

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas improper catch and release methods of sport fishing have long-lasting effects on any body of water; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is not encouraging proper management of fish stocks by allowing netting during spawning season, which destroys spawning beds; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is not encouraging proper management of fish stocks by allowing any size of fish to be retained; and

"Whereas sport fishing of Lancaster perch and other breeds in the greater Cornwall area benefit local tourism, fishing and the overall economy and will continue to do so if managed properly;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Ministry of Natural Resources to impose a seven-inch size limit on fish allowed to be kept, not allow netting during spawning season and also to reopen closed provincial parks in the area to encourage tourism and ensure a vibrant long-term sport fishing economy in eastern Ontario."

It's signed by 350 constituents.

LONDON PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition here that's signed by more than 50 outpatients from

London Psychiatric Hospital, and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the outpatients of London Psychiatric Hospital, declare our protest over the closure of London Psychiatric Hospital. We protest the closure of the London Psychiatric Hospital because it represents once again taking away from the sick, poor and defenceless while the rich get richer.

We believe that the closure of the London Psychiatric Hospital will be traumatic for patients, as it is unknown if this transitional period will be done in such a way as to maintain quality patient care. We worry that the government will not put in place community programs and are only concerned with slashing beds and programs, not in building up supports.

"We specifically protest the closure of London Psychiatric Hospital because of our doubts that an alternative to the well-run outpatient department at London Psychiatric Hospital will be as good or will ever present itself. At present, we receive inpatient treatment when needed and for the length required. We worry that this will not be available to us.

Will there be needless suicides because of bed shortages or the push to move people out of the hospital prematurely? One is left to wonder what is the primary motivation of the commission in closing psychiatric hospitals: money saving or patient care. Sad to say, but money appears the overriding concern and not the individual patients and concern for their lives."

I am pleased to affix my signature.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas 42% of all driving fatalities are alcohol-related;

"Whereas 565 persons died in alcohol-related crashes in Ontario in 1993, the most recent year for which statistics are available, and more than 26,000 drivers were charged with impaired driving in the same year;

"Whereas 63% of the total convictions for drunk driving in 1993 involved repeat offenders;

"Whereas every year drinking and driving costs Ontarians \$1.3 billion in personal financial loss, medical expenses and property damage;

"Whereas the existing measures and penalties have failed to deter chronic impaired drivers from reoffending;

"Whereas driving is a privilege, not a right, and chronic impaired drivers have failed to take their driving responsibilities seriously;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact Margaret Marland's private member's bill, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Impaired Driving), 1996, or similar legislation, as soon as possible."

I'm happy to lend my support to this petition.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital;

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature to it.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I'm pleased to present a petition forwarded to me by the United Steelworkers of America over the signature of Harry Hynd, the District 6 director, as well as Brad James, the organizing coordinator. It contains not only a petition but hundreds of letters signed by Steelworkers from all across Ontario and throughout District 6. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government added section 14 to the Ontario Labour Relations Act, 1995, as part of Bill 7, the anti-worker bill, allowing employers to ask the Ontario Labour Relations Board to disregard the democratic choice of employees who seek union membership to better their working lives; and

"Whereas hundreds of employees of Burns International Security services in southwestern Ontario voted overwhelmingly to join the United Steelworkers over seven months ago; and

"Whereas Burns is using section 14 of the Labour Relations Act, 1995, to deny collective bargaining to over 1,000 working men and women by wasting time in long hearings before the Ontario Labour Relations Board instead of sitting down at the bargaining table with their union, the United Steelworkers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Labour take immediate action to repeal section 14 of the Labour Relations Act, 1995, and allow working people the chance for a better life."

I proudly add my name to these petitioners.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): "Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail, and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

I hereby sign this petition.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I have a petition signed by some 470 residents of Etobicoke.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are residents of Etobicoke who hold as of major importance the education of the young people of Ontario;

"Whereas we are committed that the control and accountability of the education system and the determination of educational priorities remain at the local level;

"Whereas we hold that Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997, completely disregards the rights and opinions of the people of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas we feel that the Education Improvement Commission is being given sweeping powers that not only make it unaccountable for its actions, but also place it and its members above the law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please cancel the proposed legislation to disband local boards of education, and cancel all plans to take away from local boards of education public accountability, determination of educational priorities and the power to raise education taxes through property taxes. Please disband the Education Improvement Commission with its arbitrary powers immediately in order to restore to this province the true democracy that the people of Ontario hold so dear."

I agree with the sentiments and have attached my signature.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a further petition from the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government will introduce legislation to amend the Workers' Compensation Act and distribute a discussion paper about changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act; and

"Whereas the expected changes include erosion of the right to refuse unsafe work; workers will be forced to apply to their employer for WCB benefits and employers will decide if the claim is valid; reduction in power of the joint health and safety committees; and eliminate compensation for certain injuries and diseases; and

"Whereas the Workers' Compensation Act is a vital protection for all workers in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act has prevented untold numbers of accidents and saved thousands from illness and diseases;

"We, the undersigned, therefore demand full public hearings throughout the province of Ontario on the Workers' Compensation Act proposed changes, and no changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, workers' right to refuse and joint health and safety committees."

I add my name to theirs.

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EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have thousands of petitioners who have signed their names here. The petition reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, oppose the government of Ontario's cutbacks to public education."

The petitions also include a poem to the Minister of Education, which reads:

"Roses are red

"Violets are blue

"It's our \$31 million

"It doesn't belong to you.

"Protect school programs, fund them adequately and keep public education public."

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The campaign to save TVOntario is carrying on at a remarkable rate and we have been getting petitions from all across the province, including the town of Pickle Lake in north-western Ontario. I want to acknowledge Mr Ted Davies for putting together this petition. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I thank Mr Davies and I'm happy to sign my name to this petition.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of privilege, Speaker: There was supposed to be a late show tonight between me and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. He has informed me that neither he nor his parliamentary assistant can be available tonight and has asked that we move it to Thursday. I seek unanimous consent to move the late show requested by myself from tonight to Thursday to accommodate the minister's schedule.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Cochrane South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Transportation concerning highway maintenance contracts. This matter will be debated today at 6 o'clock.

Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Essex South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs concerning assistance to flood victims. This matter will also be debated at 6 o'clock.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LES DROITS ET LIBERTÉS DES EMPLOYÉS

Mr Sheehan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to provide rights and freedoms to employees with respect to membership in trade unions or employees associations and representation by them / *Projet de loi 131, Loi prévoyant des droits et des libertés pour les employés en ce qui concerne l'adhésion à un syndicat ou à une association d'employés et leur représentation par ceux-ci.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Would the member like to say a few words about the bill?

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): This is a modern piece of legislation that recognizes the challenges our workforce will face in the next millennium. It will prepare our labour market for the modern world. The bill is about restoring rights to workers. I believe workers have the fundamental right to choose how they are represented in the workforce.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Shame. Shame on you.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr Sheehan: The act will facilitate new job expansion by allowing employers the flexibility to hire more staff.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TENANT PROTECTION ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 SUR LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 96, An Act to Consolidate and Revise the Law with respect to Residential Tenancies / *Projet de loi 96, Loi codifiant et révisant le droit de la location à usage d'habitation.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): I believe the member for Fort York had the floor yesterday.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I am very pleased to continue the debate on Bill 96, an act to protect tenants. The Tenant Protection Act it's called. It's a bit laughable, of course, because as everybody who came to the hearings last year knows, this is an act that protects landlords, not tenants. There ought to be a law against a bill that pretends to say one thing and does, in effect, in substance, another. Somebody ought to be able to outlaw such things, because you can't say governments lie or this minister lies or somebody else is lying. You can't say that. It makes it complicated for those of us who want to say it, because when you look at the substance of these bills, or many of these bills, the propaganda of the title says one thing but we know, as I will exfoliate this terrible onion, that it will show otherwise.

Today we heard the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing respond to a question with respect to his landlord protection act. He still maintains, they both maintain that this is a bill that's going to help tenants. In fact, the Premier said he needs to move on with the business of this House because he wants to get on to protecting tenants; he said that. That's why I say there ought to be a law against such things, because I would want to be able to say it isn't true.

Let me start, because I touched on this theme yesterday, with respect to the goals that M. Leach introduced in this House. These are the four goals. He said, and I may not have gotten all the words, but this is more or less the intent: To protect tenants was one of his goals, or at least the Premier's goal; to create a climate for investment; streamline the administration; and another one has to do with improving maintenance. I want to tackle each and every one of them.

The first one is creating a climate for investment. Yesterday I spoke about the fact that this bill will do nothing to stimulate the building of new housing, especially for those who can least afford it. I talked yesterday, when we had this discussion, about how many of the people who came in front of that committee last year when we had the hearings said this bill will do nothing to build new housing. Even the developers said that.

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Developers came in front of that committee and I asked a question to a number of them because I was very concerned about whether we would have housing to house those who are being pushed out of the market by Conservative- or Reform-minded politics. I asked them, "Would you be building affordable housing?" Many of them said no; in fact, all of them said no.

I said, "If you are not building housing for those who can least afford it, and the government refuses to build housing for those who can least afford it, who's going to be building housing?" A number of developers who were there in front of the committee said: "That's not our business. Our business is not to worry about those who cannot afford existing housing or those who might in the future not be able to afford anything that might come on the market." It was none of their concern.

That's the problem we social democrats have with that point of view. The market does not take care of people in

need; we know that. But Tories, Reform-minded Tories actually believe that the market can take care of the needy. That's where the falsehood comes into play, because they know the market cannot take care of those needs, but they constantly espouse the ideology that the market will in fact do that. We know it can't.

In British Columbia the Social Credit Party, a party that I believe is now virtually extinct, as I hope this party will become in the near future, pretty much advocated the same thing. Steve, this is what your friends said, because Social Crediters are by and large like you folks on the other side.

The Deputy Speaker: You shouldn't address the member by his first name. You address the member by his riding.

Mr Marchese: Through you, Speaker. Thank you very much, Speaker, for your intervention.

In 1983, this is what some of the Social Credit politicians said as they were about to rid themselves of rent control: "It's a renters' market. We move out of that field and as time goes on, new development will take place to fill the need for rental accommodation because landlords and developers are not bound by legislation as to what they can charge. As a result, there will be a reasonable vacancy rate in the future as well as now."

It goes on — these are Social Credit people, very much similar to Tories in this Ontario Legislature — and this person says: "The people out there want to be able to provide for themselves. The people in BC are hard-working people and they want to provide for themselves. But because the government has got involved in the marketplace so many times, it has destroyed the initiative of the people so today they don't know what they should be doing. This government has to get out of the marketplace so that these people can provide for themselves."

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is a very important issue, rent control. We heard the Premier this afternoon talk about why it was necessary to get this piece of legislation through, but the government is not maintaining quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you please verify if there is a quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: The then consumer and corporate affairs minister in British Columbia — the Social Credit Party all the time — said:

"It is fair to say that this government identified this particular time as a window in which we could move to let the marketplace work and allow renters the opportunity to have available to them rental accommodation and have competition, as opposed to government intervention, in the marketplace. The competition of the marketplace will determine what price a person pays for an apartment. That's the way it should be."

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): You're getting it. That's the way it should be.

Mr Marchese: Monsieur Villeneuve, welcome. Nice to see you again today.

"The marketplace should be allowed to work. Behind the thrust of this bill and many other pieces of legislation we've brought before the House is this key, the fact that government has been too involved in the past."

Doesn't that sound familiar, Monsieur Villeneuve?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: You're getting it. It took you a while, but you're getting it.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): They like Socreds, though.

Mr Marchese: They love Social Credit because they're like kin, they're like cousins. They must feel sorry that the Social Credit has virtually become extinct. They should realize that the logic the Socreds applied, which is very much similar to the logic this government is applying now, didn't work. It didn't work.

It says here: "The BC minister responsible for rent control in 1983 asserted that 'these deregulatory measures will ultimately result in new real estate development, more jobs and continuing healthy availability of rental accommodation.'"

I want to ask the fine, honourable members on the other side, who are listening attentively, to listen to this. Steve, thank you for listening.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): No, we aren't.

Mr Marchese: John, please.

"A dozen years later, British Columbia is home to the lowest vacancy rates and some of the highest rents in Canada."

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): It also has the highest number of immigrants.

Mr Marchese: The what? The elimination of rent control did nothing —

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Fort York, address the Chair.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, I know you were busy talking to other members. I'm always addressing other members through you. I'm not sure what you want me to do.

The Deputy Speaker: You were exchanging remarks with the member for Scarborough East, which is not allowed. Address the Chair.

Mr Marchese: At the moment, I am speaking to them. I wasn't exchanging anything with them.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Fort York, you know too well.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker, for your kind interventions. We find it helpful from time to time.

I bring up this point to show several things. First of all, the Social Credit Party, now extinct, tried to do in 1983 what you are now doing: rely on the marketplace. You, who mythologize this wonderful marketplace to solve the human needs of our society — it failed the British Columbians in 1983, and you fine, honourable people are trying to do it again to tenants in this province, all because you want to sit in the laps of the landlords as they pat you on the back to thank you for being kind servants to their needs.

It is a disgrace. It is the most pitiful thing to witness in this province. Your policies, tried by British Columbia's Social Credit, have failed. Your policies have failed through Mulroney, have failed through Thatcher, have

failed through your friends in the US, and you continue to practise and espouse failed ideas. You continue to mythologize a marketplace that's failing a whole lot of people out there.

Your marketplace ideology has thrown one and a half million people out of work. That's what your party is all about. That's what your market is doing to people. Your market is downsizing everybody out of the workforce. You are doing it because you want to diminish the role of government. Well, I ask you to get out and let somebody else govern if you have no stomach to govern. That's the kind of politics you people espouse; you want less government intervention, to the extent that I say get out of the way.

If you don't want to govern and you don't want a healthy role for government to build housing for those in need, get out of the way, let somebody else do it. Don't stay in government to destroy essential needs the people have, and housing is an essential need. The garbage you espouse around creating a climate for investment didn't work in British Columbia and it won't work here.

1520

The member for Nepean smiles — I'm not sure — in consternation about the things I say. This is factual stuff we speak of; we're not dreaming this up. Mr Lampert, the economist they hired, that Mr Leach hired, tells us that getting rid of rent control, which is what Bill 96 does, only takes \$200 out of the \$3,000 gap the private sector has to build per unit, so this isn't going to help their friends. Mr Leach now admits: "You're right. That's why we need to do more."

But do you know what "more" means? More means what they got in the 1970s and 1960s, when governments virtually gave away land or interest-free loans or countless other subsidies. There's a long list of subsidies governments gave to the landlords, to the developers, to build. I tell you, when these fine, honourable Tories create this climate of investment, this crisis in housing, they're going to give away so much money, my money and our money, to get the developers to build housing for their own profit. These developers are going to come, hat in hand, saying: "We supported you, Tories. Now we want your support. If you want us to build, this is what we need."

Once governments stopped the housing subsidy that was given to them, these developers stopped building. That's why we haven't seen any development: not because of rent control but because the subsidies of government stopped. Then they started complaining about competition from the government, that they couldn't fill all their units because governments were competing with them. That's what these fine, Tory, honourable members say in the House and in committee. It's pitiful, and then they have the nerve to talk about protecting tenants.

That's why I dealt with yesterday and continue to deal today with the issue, which is an issue in literature all the time, of appearances and reality. The appearances of the bill talk about protecting tenants and the reality is quite different. I want to move on to that theme of protecting tenants, because this objective is not based on fact. I want to read to you the existing law which gives tenants greater protection and the current bill which erodes and

diminishes the protections of tenants. At the end of the list, I'm going to ask my Tory friend from Nepean to see whether he thinks he's still helping tenants.

Existing law: Tenants can apply for rent reductions based on decreased costs of property taxes and utilities. **The current bill:** Tenants can apply for rent reductions based on decreased property taxes only.

Existing law: Tenants can apply for rent reductions due to reduction or withdrawal of services in the past six years. The current law proposes that tenants can apply for rent reductions due to reduction or withdrawal of services in the past one year, not six.

Tenants can apply, under the Rent Control Act, for rent reductions based on inadequate maintenance over the past two years. Tenants can also apply to court, under the LTA, for an order against a landlord who is not maintaining the apartment or keeping it fit for habitation. The current bill says tenants can apply for rent reduction based on landlords not maintaining an apartment or keeping it fit for habitation within one year of the problem occurring.

Under the Rent Control Act, the act introduced by the NDP and law then, all tenants "shall" be added as parties to rent reduction applications if the issue affects all tenants in the building. In this bill, it says tenants "may" be added as parties as the new tribunal considers appropriate; it may, it shall not add all parties to a rent reduction application.

The existing law says all above-guideline increases must be analysed and approved by the rent officer. The current bill says the landlord and tenant can "agree" to above-guideline increases, limited by the 4% cap, without applying to a tribunal, but allows for a five-day cooling-off period.

You're beginning to see that there's a whole long list of these things where the rights of tenants are diminished under this bill, but the Premier and M. Leach continually say this is a bill that protects tenants. Today the minister talked about this very issue I dealt with just now, which is that the landlord and tenant can agree to the above-guideline increases. He said — M. Leach I speak of — they can negotiate a price.

Imagine negotiating a price with a tenant. I, the owner of a house, say to somebody, once they move out of an apartment and go to another one, "I want 10% more." The poor senior says, "Oh, but I can't afford it." The landlord says — because they're negotiating now — "Well, I need 10%, because I've been getting so much money less for the last many years that I really can't afford to keep you any more unless you pay up." The poor senior says: "But I really can't afford 10%. What are we going to do?"

The senior is trying to negotiate when the landlord has all the power. What is the senior in that situation to do, or a person with a disability or someone with a few children who barely has the skills to survive because of the condition that person finds himself or herself in and he or she is being asked to negotiate a fair market price with a landlord?

Speaker, I urge you to pay attention to these issues, because these other members are not. They're saying they're trying to protect tenants. How do they get away

with it? That's why I say there should be a law against such things, that they should utter such falsehoods and get away with it.

The rent registry, current law: Remember, we brought in the rent registry because people moving into an apartment didn't quite know what was up, what people were paying before them, what conditions they were buying into. So we created a rent registry to allow people to know what they were getting into. The rent registry allows all tenants to check with the minister as to legal rent and services included in that rent.

What does this government do? It says, "We no longer need it." They eliminate the rent registry because it's no longer necessary. But if you listen to M. Leach and M. Harris, they will say they're trying to move on with this bill to protect tenants. Fellow people who are watching this program, is this not laughable? More than that, is this not tragic, that M. Harris and M. Leach could stand and utter such nonsense and falsehoods?

Monsieur Villeneuve twists his head as if he doesn't understand. Tenants can apply under the current law for rebates of illegal rents and illegal charges going back six years.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: You are almost out of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Fort York, just be careful in your choice of words.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Yes, he is borderline.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm just asking you to be very careful.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. Under the current bill, tenants can apply for rebates of illegal rents going back one year, not six years. Do you see the gradual erosion of the rights of the tenant, how they're being whittled away? Do you see that? Any observer watching this program and listening to the differences between the current bill and this so-called Tenant Protection Act — there's nothing for tenants. Any neutral observer will be able to see it, unless these fine Tory sheep are blinded by what is being presented to them. I'm not sure.

1530

It goes on, and I've got a few more things here. Capital costs will no longer be limited to those that are necessary. We would see a return to the days when tenants pay for marble lobbies and other luxury items. There is a provision disallowing the pass-through of capital expenditures that are "unreasonable or of no benefit to the tenant." This would appear to be a much easier test for the landlord to meet.

Costs no longer borne will no longer be withdrawn from the rents, as was the case under our bill. That means tenants will pay in their rent, for example, for a new fridge while continuing to pay for the old one. So that provision called "costs no longer borne" is eliminated by this act and by these fine Tories who speak of helping tenants.

There is more. The Tories are getting rid of orders prohibiting a rent increase. For short, the acronym is OPRI. OPRI's — just to repeat it for the sake of those who are following this, orders prohibiting a rent increase — freeze rents, prohibiting all increases when landlords have committed a property standard violation. This would reduce the incentive to comply with property standards.

The Tory downloading on to municipalities also means they will have less money to put into enforcement.

This provision, orders prohibiting a rent increase, is gone under the current bill. This provision was there and intended to protect tenants against landlords, bad landlords, who obviously were not doing what it was necessary to do by way of property standards violations. When you get rid of the orders prohibiting a rent increase, you are literally permitting a landlord to continue to violate property standards.

In relation to this, the government says they will have, as they charge this responsibility down to the municipalities, greater fines against landlords who commit property standards violations. For that you need property standards officers. You need people to go around and supervise these problems, people who go around addressing these very violations. But these fine, honourable Tories have already cut, in the last two years, 40% of municipal funding that went to them. The download of greater responsibilities will mean that municipalities will have less money to put into issues of this kind of enforcement, not more.

While this government says, "Don't worry, we appreciate the fact that there are violations or may be violations; we're going to give more powers to the enforcement officers," what are powers if there are no people to enforce them? What are these powers and what do they mean if you don't have people to enforce them? They're meaningless, except on paper. On paper it appears as if you've given municipal officers greater power. But they've got no money to be able to hire people to enforce these violations. I find it objectionable that this government could continue to claim they're doing something for tenants when they're not.

The third issue has to do with maintenance. This issue I just addressed was connected to maintenance. In committee the minister and some of his landlord friends talked about billions of dollars' worth of maintenance that has to be done to the buildings because they're in such bad shape. What do they do? They blame rent control for this.

The tenants and many of the organizations that came in front of our committee said this to me and to the committee members who were listening: "What happens to that guideline increase that landlords get as a matter of course, that unquestioned guideline increase? Isn't that supposed to go into maintenance? And how do we prove that these landlords have put money into maintenance of these buildings?" There is no way of proving that. But the point was clear: Landlords should have been putting money that comes to them under the guideline increase for general maintenance, and they haven't been doing that, because if they had, those buildings would have been kept in shape and in such a state that you wouldn't have any complaints by tenants.

"What happened," said many of the tenants, "when so many of these landlords, under a Liberal regime — where rent skyrocketed anywhere from 10% to 110%? What happened to that money? Where did it go? Why wasn't that money put into the maintenance of those buildings? How could that money just have disappeared?"

As these landlords allow the gradual disintegration of their buildings, years later they come back to a Tory

government that will finally listen to them and say: "M. Leach, we need your help. The buildings are falling apart. We were ruined by the NDP because we couldn't raise rents to the extent that we wanted and rent control was ruining everything." So they came to M. Leach, who had a kind ear to these problems, and they espoused the same garbage the other people do as well. You hear both of them. Leach is saying: "There are \$10 billion worth of repairs that need to be done. Rent control was the culprit, so we need to get rid of it." So you see that these people are in cahoots with each other. You know that. You know, because had they been putting the money they had been getting steadily under those Liberal years of rent review, not rent control, into repair, we would not be facing the problems of disrepair now.

It comes at a time when they have a perfect government that will listen to them, because it is pro-developers; not necessarily pro-development but pro-developers and pro-landlords; nothing to do with tenants. There is no protection for tenants here at all.

There's one thing as well, another item having to do with the anti-harassment unit. They beefed up this anti-harassment unit that we've got and they said, "We are well aware that there are some landlords who are likely to push some people out, because they know that as soon as a tenant leaves and goes to another unit, they can charge whatever they want." The same applies when somebody moves into that unit that was vacated. The government is fully aware of this and, knowing that, they have increased the fines for anyone charged with harassment. So the government, on paper — this is where the theme of appearances and reality comes into play again — says, "We are going to increase fines."

But in reality, a lot of the seniors who came in front of our committee said, "We don't have the energy, we don't have the knowledge, we don't have the resources and the stamina to pursue a problem with the landlord when we are harassed by that individual." To take a landlord through this new tribunal would take forever. In the past and in the future, it would still take a long time to deal with a landlord who's abusing some senior, some person with a disability or some poor individual in that apartment.

They are keenly aware that this anti-harassment unit is not going to work for most people, because a senior who finds himself or herself very vulnerable, in a situation where they have to deal with a landlord on a day-to-day basis, where they rely on them for essential services, is not about to confront a landlord to deal with the problem. They would rather move first than have to deal with that problem. It's a greater emotional stress on that senior or person with disabilities or a person who's vulnerable to deal with a landlord on an issue of harassment than to just move out, so they would move out. That's what would happen. The appearance of the bill is that you're doing something great to help out anyone who might be harassed, but the reality is very, very different.

1540

I want to be able to quote a few people who came in front of our committee last year, because I think their quotations or at least their concerns should be here on the record. I know Mr Gilchrist is very keenly interested in

this. That's why he's talking with a group of people about this. I'm about to read to him what the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations had to say:

"The Landlord and Tenant Act, the Rent Control Act and the Rental Housing Protection Act exist to protect tenants and to provide diverse housing options for Ontario citizens. Seniors are especially dependent on these protections. We have spoken to many seniors who now live in fear that this government is turning its back on the people of this province. Therefore, the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations urges the government of Ontario to seriously consider the social impact on Ontario citizens before any amendments are made to the original statutes protecting tenants' rights."

Another individual, Ms Gwen Lee, from Hamilton, United Senior Citizens of Ontario, said this: "Seniors would be protected as long as they don't move, but seniors do move for reasons such as when their family moves and their support system is no longer there; when their spouse dies; when they become disabled; or to be closer to doctors, hospitals, shopping etc."

Another individual from Thunder Bay, the place where the Premier comes from, Marilyn Warf —

Interjection: No. North Bay.

Mr Marchese: North Bay. Sorry. Close to that area. I'm sure Marilyn Warf wouldn't want to be misrepresented by me in this regard.

Mr Christopherson: Nor misrepresented by him.

Mr Marchese: Or by the Premier. She is being misrepresented by him on a daily basis. This is what she had to say:

"Access to affordable housing has always been a problem for persons with disabilities, because their income is usually 60% to 70% lower than persons without disabilities. The potential is great that this legislation will cause a major housing crisis." She represents Persons United for Self-Help in Northwestern Ontario.

These are the kinds of voices we heard and these are the kinds of voices that some of the members dismissed yesterday as just being some few activists, or dismissed them as some few NDPers trying to fight this government. These are real people, part of real organizations, with very serious concerns about what this is going to do to them, what this bill will do to them.

This government on a daily basis says they do not like advocacy, and we remember what they did to the Advocacy Commission: They repealed that in a couple of weeks. They hate advocacy and they hate advocates and they drool at the thought of their elimination. They have systematically done so.

The Advocacy Commission was set up to protect vulnerable people, seniors, people with mental illness, people with disabilities, and this government says: "We don't need that. Families will take care of their own, so we're going to get rid of the Advocacy Commission."

When we pointed out that much of the abuse sometimes is committed by family members, they scoffed at that and said we were trying to say that somehow families couldn't take care of their own. That belies the facts, and the facts are that family members sometimes, if not often, in issues of abuse are hurt by their own.

But they got rid of that commission, they got rid of the advocates, and with this too they have cut, if not eliminated, funding for a number of advocacy groups trying to help out tenants. They're gone. We have heard from a number of organizations across Ontario where they deputed in front of our committee and said, "The government has cut funding from us." Why? Because they're trying to advocate for tenants who are about to be whacked by this government.

What does this government do every time there are some bills that are about to hurt a whole sector of the population? It pulls the planks from the floor. Who are these planks? In this case, advocates who are trying to help out people who are very vulnerable. They say, "We don't need advocacy and tenants don't need advocates, because we are about to pass a bill called Bill 96 and it's going to protect tenants." But I showed you that there is nothing in this bill that is intended for tenants, nothing at all. This bill is about landlords and this bill is about helping to transfer money from those who can least afford it to those who make a great deal of money.

Remember, yesterday I quoted J.J. Barnicke, a fellow in real estate, who pointed out that people investing in apartments have done very, very well. There's 10% to 15% profit annually. They're doing okay. They don't need the help of these Conservatives. They're doing fine on their own. Why would they introduce a bill that is about to whack 33% of the population who live in apartments? We're talking about 3.3 million people who live as tenants. We're talking about people a third of whom earn less than \$23,000; \$20,000 to \$23,000. A third of them earn less than \$23,000, and those who earn more than \$23,000 can't be wealthy.

Certainly many choose to be in apartments, I will grant you that, but most live in apartments because they can't afford a home. I can tell you, most of them would love to own a home. Most people in this country would love to own a home, but they can't afford it. That's why they rent, and that's why governments exist: to protect them against the abuses of bad landlords. This government, Tory, Reform-minded, is saying, "We've got to get out of the way," like they did in British Columbia in 1983. The Social Credit, Reform-minded politicians got out of the way in 1983. Did they help the situation any? No. It's statistically proven. There's a great deal of evidence. Everybody knows that in British Columbia nothing was solved by passing this down to the marketplace, allowing landlords to do what they want. Yet this government is quite willing and drooling at the thought of replicating the mistake, as if they've learned nothing from the past. What can you say of a government that can learn nothing from the past? On what does it base its foundation? If it bases its foundation on things that have failed, how can the future look except bleak for those affected by these bills?

I tried to find a few things that I might speak to that obviously help the tenants, and that's why I referred to the anti-harassment unit. That's one of the few things that are supposed to be good, because it increases fines for those who are caught, if they're ever caught, committing a violation and harassment against the tenant. On paper it's good, but in practice it doesn't happen. We know it doesn't happen.

1550

The other issue of maintenance: We know that you have beefed up the enforcement fines around violations, but we know there are going to be very few enforcement officers. We know because when we were in committee we heard that there are very few, and those few officers sometimes were not very helpful to the tenants. You should hear some of those sad stories being told to us about their history in association with some of these enforcement officers where they didn't get any help; in fact, they were getting the wrong type of help from these so-called enforcement officers.

The only two little things that are there to provide some assistance and relief to tenants are virtually of no use, but this government, through M. Harris and M. Leach, flaunts this bill as a bill that protects tenants. That's why I referred to Shakespeare yesterday, because one of his famous lines that I recall speaks of this issue: "Fair is foul and foul is fair." The bill appears to be fair, but it is foul, and it is foul although it appears to be fair.

That theme of appearances and reality is universal. It has lasted throughout the centuries and it continues in this theatre, in this place, with this government, because this is theatre by this government. It's propagandist in nature. It attempts to tell the poor people out there there's something in it for them, and we know there is absolutely nothing for them except a whole lot of abuse and a whole lot of whacking, because tenants are going to be whacked by rent increases they cannot afford. Those tenants are poor working people, disabled people, seniors whose incomes have dropped over the years and people displaced by you, you who have fired literally 20,000 people. I'll bet at the end of your term you will have let many more than 20,000 go, people who have fallen victim to your policies and victim to the marketplace you're trying to defend.

I know the tenants are going to write to this government and they're going to say to this government, "We will defeat you in the next election." I can only pray that will happen.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): The member for Fort York makes very interesting arguments in light of the fact that it was his government's rent control legislation that actually had an adverse effect on tenants in this province. This bill, I am pleased to say, is going to give protection to tenants; their bill simply delayed the implementation of rent increases.

I can give you a very good example of a building in my riding, on Seneca Avenue, as a matter of fact, where the rent appeal hearing took three years. When the decision was rendered against those tenants and in favour of the landlord, they had three years of back rent increases to pay. For almost all of them, without exception, it was an impossible increase. It was an impossible amount of money for them to pay.

We hear all the time from the opposition parties about how money-gouging etc the landlord or the property owner is, and I'd like to tell you that the landlord of those two buildings on Seneca Avenue in my riding sat down at a public meeting which I organized with the residents of those two buildings, and although he had

been given a court order awarding him that retroactive increase, he agreed to keep them in the building without paying it retroactively because they simply couldn't afford it.

With the kind of legislation the New Democratic government had at that time, there was no protection for those tenants. This legislation does protect the tenants where they are today at the rents they pay today, and they shouldn't be afraid of it.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm pleased to comment on the fine speech by the member for Fort York. I am quite amazed, however, this afternoon that we are discussing housing issues. I know the people in Algoma-Manitoulin believe that housing issues are important, but they would believe, and I know they would believe, that talking about Bill 125, about doing something about the flying truck wheels in this province, is something that needs to happen now.

As a matter of fact, we thought it should happen in February. We remember when the Minister of Transportation, with much fanfare out at a truck inspection station, said, "We're going to pass this bill." Our party said: "Bring it in here. Let's go, let's do it, let's have this bill before the House and we will pass it. We will even give it unanimous consent so we can give it third reading in a day."

That's what we were talking about, so I'm surprised. I know my constituents would be concerned about the housing issues. I know that people throughout the riding would think this is an important issue to discuss. But they think on this day that we should be talking about wheels and tires that kill people on our highways and that we should do something about it —

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I gave you a chance. I thought you'd come back but you're still on the same issue. It's a rent issue, it's not a transportation issue. It's a housing issue. You said you'd come back on housing. That would be fine with me.

Mr Michael Brown: I'm sure this is directly related to the housing issue because we should not be talking about housing today. You know that. I'm sure that most members in this House want to be giving second and third reading to the truck safety bill.

Mr Christopherson: I'm very pleased and proud to stand and comment on the remarks of my colleague, our critic for housing and municipal affairs, the member for Fort York. I think he delivers some of the most impassioned, articulate, clear-thinking addresses that this House has the benefit of hearing.

When you hear the member for Fort York talk about the impact on seniors and on the disabled and on the most vulnerable, you're hearing from a member who knows what he's talking about. When he talks about this government's dreadful record attacking the rights of the most vulnerable by eliminating, with pride yet, the Advocacy Act, a piece of legislation that provided protection for the most vulnerable, the member for Fort York does it because he understands very clearly that there is an agenda at play here and in every piece of legislation this government brings forward there are clear winners and clear losers. There's no balance or fairness, and in this case it's tenants lose, owners win. Their pals

win. Again, many of those who are renters are among the most vulnerable.

My colleague from Fort York, Rosario, mentioned Gwen Lee from Hamilton. I know Gwen very well. So do all the people in Hamilton. She's one of the strongest voices for the rights of seniors and the needs of seniors, and the plight of seniors in many cases. She has clearly said that this legislation, not what is called tenant protection, attacks tenants' rights and leaves tenants vulnerable. I would ask this government to listen to Gwen Lee and all those other advocates who are speaking for the most vulnerable as has my colleague from Fort York.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It was interesting to hear the address made by the member for Fort York, a very impassioned presentation. He was asking to listen to voices, and certainly there is another side to this. There are other voices that come through and those happen to be from the landlords who have had their properties trashed. I'm sure you've heard some but you don't seem to reflect on those voices as well.

There is another side to this, there is a balance. You were talking all the time about the sky is falling and how terrible it is, and this bill in particular. We heard from you about a little cut in income tax and how terrible that was going to be and where was that going to go. You've now seen where that particular one went. We've actually ended up with more revenue because taxes were cut. Remember what happened with your government. By increasing taxes you got less revenue. So have a look around and find some of the other things that are happening with this government. Some of the things that we're doing do work and it isn't always the sky falling as you were making reference to earlier.

One of the things I commented on yesterday, one of the greatest tenant protections we can have, is an adequate, good supply of rental property for our tenants, that they have a choice out there. They're not forced into under 1% vacancy rate available to them. We need to give encouragement not only to developers but to landlords as well to have more properties available in the future.

The marketplace won't work is the argument that you're using. Have a look at what has been going on for the last two decades with the ceiling that we've had in there. What has happened to available property? It just literally disappeared. Look at the other cities where they brought it in — New York, Washington. In the 1940s they brought in rent control. What ended up happening? Ghettos in the middle of those centres where landlords walked away and we just didn't have any properties left for people to rent.

1600

Mr Marchese: I thank all the members for their comments. I want to say briefly that the sky is falling and it's falling on those who are the most vulnerable. This man from Northumberland says there is another side. The other side that he speaks of is the side of the landlord — the landlord, who is one of the most powerful individuals in this province. The landlord controls so much power over the lives of 33% of the population, and the sky is falling for them. It's not falling for the landlord, the other so-called side of which the member for Northumberland speaks.

To the member for Mississauga South, 73% of the deputations that came in front of our committee two months ago said: "Leave rent control alone. It is the best protection we've got." This bill is going to affect the most vulnerable. This bill explicitly gives landlords the right to discriminate on the basis of income. This has been strongly criticized by the Human Rights Commission and other advocacy groups, and the commissioner is now Keith Norton, one of their fellow Tory members.

This bill, under the changes affecting care homes, says that landlords can try to evict a tenant who no longer needs the level of care provided by the landlord or a tenant who needs a level of care that the landlord is not able to provide. This is a new reason to evict. Care home landlords may force tenants to move out because they want to demolish, convert, repair or renovate the home, and because they've got rid of the Rental Housing Protection Act, it's possible to do this without municipal approval.

This bill is a devastation against 33% of the most vulnerable people of this province. They're not all vulnerable surely, but most of these people have low incomes, disabilities, mental illness or are working people, working poor, and middle class yet, those you have diminished to working poor these days. This is not a bill that protects tenants. I urge those watching to fight back against this government that is about to whack them again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further debate?

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): I rise today on an issue which really first interested me when I was elected in 1990 and going into 1991. As you will recall, Madam Speaker, the NDP brought in certain rent legislation which I felt was fundamentally flawed. I would like to take just a little while to review the chronology of events leading up to the present situation.

In 1976, rent control was brought in by a PC government, a government which was concerned that we were in a period of high rental increases. The high rental increases occurred after a prolonged period of depressed rents. The building business, being unregulated in those days, was subject to what happens in all property development: Builders get a little excited and start building and they build a significant oversupply.

Rents were fairly depressed in this province relative to what people were earning for a long period of time, and then, when builders stopped building, after a certain length of time there was an absorption rate. When that absorption rate hit, we then found that there was a shortage of housing. Landlords, instead of offering three televisions or three months rent-free, which had been the case when I came to live in Toronto in 1969 — there had been a period in 1976 when rents went up quite significantly. The government of the day, the government of Bill Davis, brought in rent controls. Those controls were to be a two-year measure, and of course we all know that when governments bring in measures which are temporary they tend to stick around. We are all reminded constantly of income taxes, which came in as a temporary measure at the beginning of this century.

When the rent controls were brought in by the PC government, some of the large landlords expressed a

desire to create a sinking fund which would be an amount of money which would be set aside towards renovation of the buildings. This is something that I hope the two NDP members who are in the House might just pay attention to. They constantly say: "Why don't the landlords put money aside? They should have put money aside." The significant thing was that Revenue Canada disallowed this. It was clear they were going to have to pay taxes on that money as if it were profit, on the money they wanted to set aside for the sinking fund for renovations. The federal government disallowed the setting aside of funds, and this was why the rent control system was probably flawed from the very beginning of the process.

Setting that aside, the effect on rents was to control rents, which was what it was supposed to do. Unfortunately, the Liberals came along and brought in some new rent legislation. The original buildings which had been controlled by rent review were those buildings built prior to the legislation coming in. All new buildings were not subject to rent review, so there was still a desire among builders to build rental buildings, as there was an increasing market in Toronto and in those days there was a significant increase in the population in Toronto. When the Liberals included all buildings under rent review, we had a sudden grinding of wheels as all the builders completely stopped building any buildings.

The bill they brought in allowed landlords to pass through the interest on 85% of the purchase price. I am a commercial real estate broker and I remember at the time a lot of commercial real estate agents saying: "They're nuts. This kind of gearing, this high gearing encourages builders and property owners to put on a very large mortgage."

A practice grew up where you would have second mortgages put on buildings as they were sold and the vendor of the buildings would say, "Okay, I agree to have a very low interest rate on a second mortgage, but the second mortgage will be up from what a bank will lend reasonably as a first mortgage, all the way up to 85% of the purchase price, and we will always set the interest rate on the mortgage so that it will increase each year, so that as the landlord gets an increase with respect to the pass-through of that financing, they will always be in the red, so consequently for the five-year window that you're allowed to get increases year over year, the landlord will be allowed to get an increase."

They also allowed the complete financing of all kinds of renovation costs which had not been covered before. Under the Tory legislation it had always been a principle that there would be a pass-through of reasonable expenditures for renovations, but under the Liberal legislation we suddenly had the phenomenon that there was a meat chart of all the expenditures a landlord could make and it would show what the amortization period on all of those items was, so that some landlords — absolutely not the majority but some landlords — financed the building up to 85% and in addition to that chose the items from the meat chart of renovations that would give them the quickest return possible in order to increase rents. We had a period where there were a few very savvy landlords using this flawed Liberal legislation with rents increasing quite significantly.

1610

When the NDP came to power they talked about the example of rents increasing, and I've made a note here: in Kingston 224%, in Timmins 189% and in Ottawa 192%. They never said how many units that covered and they never said what the base rent was, so that somewhat distorted the argument, but nevertheless we did have unusually large increases.

The Liberal legislation: In fairness to the Liberals I have to say you had sat down and negotiated between the landlords and the tenants and there was an agreement thrashed out between landlords and tenants. However, the final legislation which came out did not reflect what the landlords and tenants had agreed on.

It did not enshrine the principle of increasing over the period of years the chronically depressed buildings up to market rent. Had that been done, we probably wouldn't have some of the distortions we have in the marketplace today, where we have some buildings with fairly high rents where landlords cannot get the legal maximum simply by merit of the fact that the market dictates, "No, I'm not going to pay any more," and then we have some other, chronically depressed rents where the tenants are getting an incredible bargain, and unfortunately the landlords in those buildings cannot afford to properly renovate the buildings.

The problems caused by the Liberals and personified as the "marble hall" syndrome continued until the NDP came to power. I think they made an effort to change; I just believe they didn't understand enough about the situation. The NDP did the worst thing any government can possibly do, and that is, they retroactively passed legislation, to the extent that renovations of buildings had to be paid before the cost could be passed through to the tenants, before the cost could be taken to the rent review board.

All of the landlords had gone ahead and spent money on renovating their buildings and were told after the fact, notwithstanding that it has always been a principle of rent review since the Tories brought it in in the 1970s that the cost you bear on renovation will be paid back over a number of years but it will be after the fact — they had already spent the money and they were told: "No, you cannot get that money back. The maximum we will allow is 3% of the renovation per year over the base rent for a maximum of three years."

If you have a very high rent and the building is in fairly good condition, to get 3% extra per year over a three-year period is quite a handsome amount of money, but if you have an apartment which is \$300 per month and you get 3%, you're getting \$9 extra per month, or over the three years \$27 per month more. If you have to put a new roof on a small apartment building, it costs an awful lot more than that. So landlords, who had not been allowed to have a sinking fund by Revenue Canada, notwithstanding what the NDP keep on telling you — "Oh, the landlord should have put money away." They weren't allowed to. The tax department wouldn't allow the landlords to do it.

Mrs Boyd: They allowed them to put it away; they just didn't allow them a tax rebate.

Mr Turnbull: I hear some heckling from the member for London Centre that they should have put it away even after paying the taxes. This is typical of the comments we find from the socialists. They don't understand how business works.

Mrs Boyd: Depreciation. Depreciation.

Mr Turnbull: She's shouting, "Depreciation." What about depreciation? It still doesn't mean you get enough money to renovate buildings. According to your own ministry, when Minister Cooke brought in Bill 4, there was \$20 billion worth of deferred maintenance on apartments in this province, and your answer is depreciation. It isn't enough. You didn't allow enough money, because it had always been a principle of rent controls that the renovations would be paid for after the fact. It annoys me to no end when members simply ignore the facts as to how bills have worked. No matter how flawed the Liberal legislation may have been, the landlords who did renovations during that period had a reasonable expectation that they should be able to get that money back, and it led to many landlords going bankrupt.

Statistically, the average landlord in this province has less than six units. The average landlord is somebody of relatively modest means who typically has come from another country and has had confidence in the idea of owning real estate, and that is their only pension fund. As a direct result of what the NDP did with Bill 4, disallowing retroactively the pass-through of those renovation charges, it had the direct effect of bankrupting all kinds of small landlords.

I have to say, a lot of those small landlords had never voted Tory in the past. Some of them we know had voted for the NDP and said: "We will never vote for them again. They have bankrupted us. We came to this country, we've worked hard and we've put every penny for our old age into these buildings, and we are now being bankrupted." That was as a result of legislation which retroactively reached back and said: "It doesn't matter what the law was at the time you did this. We couldn't care less. We're going to change it retroactively."

The NDP did it because it looks good to what they believe is their core constituency, but the fact is that the tenants of this province were very ill served by that legislation because we now have a further deterioration in the state of the rental buildings in this province. What all the members in this House should have as a target is to make sure that the less fortunate people in this province have good, affordable, clean, safe, properly renovated buildings, and the NDP made sure that was impossible.

When we looked at the legislation, it became apparent that there were some people on fixed incomes who couldn't afford to pay any significant amount more in rent. We believe we introduced a very balanced approach. We had a consultation with landlords and tenants over a long period of time and we brought forward legislation that all the sitting tenants in buildings are protected under rent legislation. The guideline last year was 2.8%; the guideline this year was 2.8%. These are the lowest guidelines on rent increases in Ontario's rent control history.

But the fact is that the NDP have such a philosophical bent that they are against anybody being able to have any

private ownership. They don't want to see anybody profiting in any way from rent. There seems to be something dirty about the fact that somebody put their life savings in —

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: There is no quorum in this House, and everybody should listen to Mr Turnbull, everyone.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum, clerk?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for York Mills.
1620

Mr Turnbull: While we had that short intermission, I heard so much drivel from the member for Fort York, who absolutely refuses to accept that his legislation when they were the government bankrupted small landlords, people who had one, two, three, four, five apartments, people who had put their life savings into them. Our legislation protects all sitting tenants in the apartments. It will allow a modest pass-through, and at the time the apartment becomes vacant —

Mr Marchese: A modest pay-off for someone.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, come to order.

Mr Marchese: I'm trying.

Mr Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I suggest that if the member for Fort York cannot control himself, you may want to eject him, because he doesn't seem to want to listen to the debate.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Member for York Mills, take your seat for a moment.

Could I ask the members from the NDP, in particular the member for Cochrane North and the member for Fort York —

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): It wasn't me.

The Acting Speaker: If I'm mistaken, I'm sorry. But the member for Fort York particularly, please come to order.

Mr Turnbull: We have brought forward this balanced legislation that will allow the existing tenants, the tenants who are sitting in apartments today, to be protected by rent control. When people vacate apartments, it allows the landlord to then reset the rent at market rates, whatever the market will bear, and when the next tenant comes in, guess what? They're also protected by rent control on an ongoing basis.

The interesting thing is that during the last recession, we found the situation that many of the landlords weren't taking the full amount of rent increases that they were allowed. That was the market working; it was nothing to do with their legislation.

Mr Marchese: Leave it alone then. Leave the act alone.

Mr Turnbull: Clearly, those apartments which were at the high end simply hit that ceiling, but the ones at the low end, the ones that are most in need of renovation, are the ones for which they cannot make money available. Our bill is fairly tough on landlords who do not keep

their buildings in order. There are fines of up to \$100,000 for this, something the NDP never did. The NDP did nothing to protect those tenants.

Mr Marchese: Tough, huh? What did you do? You increased the fines, huh?

Mr Turnbull: Madam Speaker, since you are unable or unwilling to get the member for Fort York to simmer down, I'll just point out my own record on protecting tenants. In 1994 I brought in Bill 104, which was an act to protect vital services for tenants, a bill which was passed, which allowed municipalities to add on to the tax bill the cost of doing any important renovations vital to the vital services, ensuring heat and hydro and water.

Mr Marchese: What happened to that? Why didn't you include that in the bill?

Mr Turnbull: The bill passed and it is law today, sir. Obviously, you don't know what you're talking about. The bill exists. The law is in place today.

Mr Marchese: You did correct me, David.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, come to order. Member for York Mills, address the Chair.

Mr Turnbull: The bill was passed, Madam Speaker, and perhaps you might be interested in some of the comments.

Len Rubenstein, the president of the York Mills Tenants' Association, said, "Bill 104 is a great tool for municipalities who really care about the protection of tenants."

Glen and Kathy Stephenson, who were from the tenants' association at 1002 Lawrence Avenue East, said: "Tenants in North York are grateful to David Turnbull for his efforts. We're pleased that other municipalities will also benefit from his work."

Mayor Mel Lastman said, "I appreciate David Turnbull's efforts in bringing forward legislation to allow all municipalities in the province to enact vital services bylaws to protect tenants."

The point I'm making here is that as much as the NDP would like to have it this way, that they have a corner on compassion and protecting tenants, they are dead wrong. They have done nothing to protect tenants; they have done everything to decrease the quality of the housing stock of the province in this province, which didn't allow the low-end housing stock to be regenerated, to have some money brought in. But our bill is very innovative, inasmuch as all the existing tenants continue to be protected by rent control. As a landlord gets a unit available, he can set the rent at the market rent, which should have been done under the Liberal legislation and was negotiated between the landlords and tenants in those days, and they never proclaimed that part.

We are moving to protect tenants and to protect landlords in a very balanced way. Clearly, when you get two completely differing points of view, you have to get a balance in the middle. This is what we believe we have achieved with this legislation, much in the same way as we're doing everything to make sure those tenants who are in the low-income category are helped.

Reading from the 1997 Ontario budget speech, it says: "In total, the Ontario tax reduction cuts taxes for 530,000 individuals and families and eliminates Ontario income tax entirely for another 655,000 individuals and families.

The federal government...is collecting income taxes from more than 55% of the low-income families paying no Ontario tax."

We're well on our way to making sure that we get new construction of buildings in this province; that we're able to protect tenants in place by ensuring that maintenance standards are maintained by having very tough laws and stiff penalties for those landlords who do not comply with this legislation; and at the same time ensuring there is some money available for landlords to be able to upgrade their buildings more than 3% per year for three years in some of the low-income apartments. This is what we're doing to protect tenants. This is what we're doing to protect the rental stock in this province. I am very proud to be supporting this government bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Michael Brown: I enjoyed the presentation by the chief government whip. I just wonder why the chief government whip would have chosen to speak about housing issues this afternoon. I see the Minister of Transportation here and he was eagerly hoping we could deal with the flying-truck-wheel situation, where people are dying in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Would the member for Algoma-Manitowlin please speak to the bill we're debating.

Mr Michael Brown: Well, I am; I'll relate this directly. In any event, it was an interesting time. Mr Turnbull and I spent some time together as we debated the two previous incarnations of rent control in this province. One of the things I will give him some credit for is that he was totally consistent. He and his colleague from Dufferin-Peel used to speak often about how there was really no problem with the cost of rental accommodation in this province, that there was an income problem in this province, and that if everyone had a suitable income they would be able to rent whatever they needed.

They were in favour of something called in situ grants or something like that; I forget the name. They were going to provide any low-income person with enough money to get to that 30% threshold. I thought it was an interesting but totally impossible financial way of dealing with it.

But I want to tell the people in this House and across Ontario that there is a solution to high-cost rents, and that is to come to the retirement community of Elliot Lake, where we have a retirement living program which is second to none in a most beautiful community which will supply affordable rents to people in a beautiful setting.

1630

Mr Marchese: I must be frank. I didn't enjoy the speech at all. It was painful. It was painful because as I read this bill I know what it does to tenants. He stands up talking about the fact that he too has a claim on those who can least afford to find a decent place. I say, "Prove it." The way he proves it is to talk to us about a bill he introduced that has passed which was good and to clothe himself as a grandfather of tenants through that bill. That's fine. He did a good deed with that bill.

This Bill 96, the so-called Tenant Protection Act, does very little for the people you pretend to help. I defy you, member for York Mills, and any other member who will follow you, to read through this bill and point to the good

things it does for tenants, point to the good things it does for low-income tenants and for the children who find themselves in a difficult situation with respect to finding a place to live. I defy you, member for York Mills, to do so.

You told me what I have already told you, two things; that you've increased the fines to those who harass. From where we were at, we know you've done that. But we know you know that there will be ongoing harassment and that it's difficult to get at, so you're not saved by increasing the fine. You've increased the fines for those who commit violations against building code standards. This is the only thing you have done through this bill that helps out. Everything else in this bill is a whack against the majority of the 33% of the population who are tenants. I defy you to go through this bill and show me how they are protected. Show me.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time is expired. Further questions or comments. The member for Mississauga South.

Mr Marchese: Go through the bill, David, and show me how it helps tenants.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, come to order.

Mr Marchese: If there's a nincompoop here, it's you, David. I defy you.

Mrs Marland: Could we restart the clock?

The Acting Speaker: No. Continue.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You did nothing of the sort.

Mr Turnbull: Yes, I did.

Mr Marchese: Go through the bill.

The Acting Speaker: We're going to start over again.

Mr Len Wood: It's Turnbull who's causing all the problems.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York and member for York Mills, member for Cochrane North, come to order. The member for Mississauga South.

Mrs Marland: I wish the members from the New Democratic Party who are yelling across the floor had such passion in their hearts to protect tenants when they as a government were spending multimillions of dollars building non-profit housing which had subsidies of \$2,500 a unit, when in fact there were units available to be rented in this city for anywhere between \$500 and \$700 a unit. One given day there was an advertisement in the Toronto Star for a bachelor apartment, \$400 a month. At the same time this New Democratic Party, when they were the government, were subsidizing bachelor apartments in this city at \$2,000 a unit; not to mention, of course, all the fraud and corruption that was going on in non-profit housing corporations across this province, even to the degree, of course, that we had an example in the Van Lang Centre in Ottawa which caused the resignation of the then Minister of Housing.

This is not the party to criticize a bill that in fact does protect tenants in this province. I say to you, Madam Speaker, simply that it's unfortunate they are scare-mongering to the degree that people watching today will think as tenants that they're not protected when in fact they are. They are protected, and they are protected in private sector buildings. The point is that the fear that is

being generated by misinformation is cruel and irresponsible.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I am surprised, first of all, that we're not dealing with the bill on wheel safety, because it would be more important — let me put it in this phrase, just this part of it — it seems to me that we should not be spending out time killing rent control when there could be wheels flying off trucks that could be killing people. I'll leave it at that and go on to the rent control legislation. I'm trying to help out the Minister of Transportation, who has been embarrassed by the Premier. I want to help him out as much as I can.

Anyway, what I want to say is that you're undoing what the Davis government did back in 1975 and 1976. They responded to a crisis which existed in 1975. In the middle of an election campaign, Premier Davis promised rent control, and they delivered on the promise of rent control. Of course now you're trying to undo that. That was there to protect tenants in this province and now it is not going to happen.

The conversion from rental to condominium is going to be very scary to people now living in rental accommodation. Instead of seeing an increase in rental accommodation in the province, my belief is this legislation will result in less accommodation. When you ask the developers, "Is this going to make you build more rental accommodation?" they will say, "No, indeed it is not." What we're going to have to do is build bigger halls to hold the fund-raisers for the Conservative Party, because those large developers will not fit into the present halls. We could see a building boom as a result, because you're doing their bidding, in effect.

The senior citizens in apartment buildings, and other vulnerable people, are going to be very concerned because they didn't remember any Conservative candidate promising to get rid of rent control, and that's exactly what's happening with this bill.

Mr Turnbull: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin says that I'm consistent. Yes, I believe I am consistent, which is much more than I can say for the Liberal Party. One never knows where they stand on any issue. They were against the NDP legislation, they're against our legislation, yet the largest rental increases in the history of this province occurred as a direct result of their legislation. As I've already outlined, we've got the examples of 225% increases.

To the member for Fort York, he says to show him where the protection is. Read the bill, member for Fort York. The fact is that the sitting tenants are protected. They are under rent control. It is only when the unit becomes vacant that the rent can be reset. That's as plain as I can make it. If you don't understand that, I'm sorry, you really are in tough shape.

To my colleague the member for Mississauga South, as always I thank her for her kind words. She correctly points out the incredible subsidies and money that was wasted on non-profit housing. I have a non-profit housing unit in my riding which was built by the Labourers' International Union, Bob Rae's favourite union, where the superintendent was paid \$65,000 a year plus a car. He happened to be the son-in-law of the man who ran the Labourers' International. I'm sure that was a coincidence,

of course. The NDP built non-profit units which cost a quarter of a million dollars each.

Mr Marchese: Where would those poor people live otherwise?

Mr Turnbull: Yes, member for Fort York, I can show you, using your own press releases. These were units that you could have bought for \$110,000 at the time, because you're incompetent.

The member for St Catharines says, "What about less accommodation?" No. When you get the market, you do get construction.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

1640

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): In terms of why we're discussing the basic eradication of rent control today with this bill they call the rental protection bill, which is actually the landlord protection bill, I find it quite strange that the government would find time on their agenda to deal with eliminating protection for vulnerable people when everybody on this side of the House is asking the Premier to follow the lead of his own minister who wants to put forth the protection of motorists on our highways who are being endangered by flying truck tires probably as we speak here today.

Why does the government press ahead with eliminating protection for housing? That's the question I think all Ontarians are asking. Why is the government in such a rush to eliminate the protection for housing that's affordable? When many people are out of work, when many seniors are living on meagre pensions, when social assistance has been cut by over 20%, this government sees it as a priority to further attack their income and their ability to survive in a very costly economy. Why would this government see this as a priority when they've got flying truck tires on our highways? That is the question people should be asking. Why is it so important for them to try and ram this thing through that is going to be hurtful to a majority of Ontarians who are already suffering?

We must remember that if you look at tenants compared to owners, for instance, 1.5 million renters are more likely to be young families, lone-parent families, single-parent families or single people many of whom are seniors. Here is the majority of people who do live in rental accommodation. They're not generally your wealthy; they're your people who are, as I said, single-parent families, young people or seniors. They can't afford to take this increase which is going to be thrust upon them by this government.

This is a real shell game, a con game. The government is saying, "We're still going to have protection for you," but as soon as you move out of your apartment, guess what's going to happen to your unit? The sky is the limit. The landlord could raise that rent to any level he or she wants when you move out. What happens, generally speaking, is that 25% of tenants move every year. So within the next four or five years probably all the apartments across Metro and Ontario, or a great number of them, are going to have their rents hit the roof, literally, because there will be no control when you leave that apartment.

You can imagine what kind of pressure there's going to be on those tenants. It's like having a gun to the tenant's head. It is an incentive to the landlord to not turn up the heat in the wintertime, an incentive not to do repairs, maybe an incentive to be obnoxious so the tenant will leave, because if the tenant leaves, the landlord gets a bonus from the Conservative government: the landlord can then raise the rent.

You can imagine the pressure there's going to be on all these seniors especially. They're going to be intimidated by a lot of these landlords, not because it's the landlord's fault necessarily, it's the fault of this government which is putting a bounty on the heads of seniors and the poor with this piece of legislation. That's what it's doing. If you can shove someone out of an apartment, you're going to get a payoff from Mike Harris and Al Leach. That's what this bill does. It is a bounty at the courtesy of the Conservatives and their big fund-raising pals. That's what they've done here.

It couldn't have happened at a worse time. We've got unemployment in this province at a rate that is obnoxiously high. All over Metro, in Windsor, in Ottawa we've got high unemployment. Where? Probably among the same people who are single-parent families, the young, people who are looking for jobs and can't find them. So what does this bill do? It essentially now threatens their home. This is supposed to be a small government that believes in getting out of people's faces. This government is everywhere. Now it's in the bedrooms of every apartment. Fifty per cent of the population of Metro, for instance, are tenants. This government is now going into their bedrooms and saying, "Hey, listen, we are now going to put a bounty on all your bedrooms." That's what they're doing.

This government can't stay away from people. It just has to be wherever people are. It's now going to put in this new market value assessment system, a new tax on their homes, a new threat to their livelihood and their ability to survive in their apartments. Wherever you see this government, you see trouble, and who is the trouble for? It's never for the big guys. It's never for the big corporations. They leave them alone because they are their bosom buddies. But they like picking on the vulnerable.

That is what this bill does, despite the fact that deputation after deputation told them, that tenant associations all across Ontario said: "Do not introduce your landlord protection act. At best leave things alone. We don't want you to intervene in the housing industry. You've done enough damage. Don't do it." Yet the government says, "We know best." Big Brother, Mike Harris, he knows best.

He's going to introduce the landlord protection act because he wants to reward his wealthy friends, as he does with the tax cut: the same agenda, the same rationale. It doesn't matter what you said at the hearings all across Ontario — nobody wanted this bill — they're going to do it to you anyway. "We do what we want." That's the motto of Mike Harris's government: "We do what we want whether you like it or not. That's what we do to people."

Here is another example, just like Bill 103 dismantled local government, just like Bill 104 dismantled public

education, now we've got the landlord protection act, which dismantles affordable housing.

Madam Speaker, you know yourself, being from an urban downtown riding, how important it is to have affordable housing in the downtown core, because it means you don't have to live out in the suburbs if you don't have a car. You can still be near the subway. If you're a senior and you don't drive, you can get on the streetcar or bus and go to the hospital or go to the library, so a lot of seniors have stayed in the downtown core. A lot of the working poor have stayed in the downtown core because the housing is affordable. The neighbourhoods are affordable, the neighbourhoods are vibrant and the neighbourhoods are very alive because of affordable housing.

What this piece of legislation, Bill 96, the landlord protection act of Mike Harris, does is threaten neighbourhoods, because now you're going to have the threat of higher rents in every apartment across every city in Ontario, and especially in high-cost cities like Metropolitan Toronto and its six municipalities. This is going to be a severe threat to their viability because it means not only is the phone bill going up, not only is the price of hydro going up; now it's the price of basic accommodation that is being threatened by this gun to their heads, essentially encouraging landlords to push them out of their units. That's what this bill does. It encourages landlords, and as I said, it's the fault of this government and not the landlords, because they've given this gun to these landlords and said, "Here, use it if you have to, to stick up the tenants for more money." That's what they're going to do right across Ontario and right across Metro.

This government when it came into power, the first thing it did is say, "We're not in the housing business." They stopped building affordable housing. Because there were some faults in the system, they said: "Okay. There's something wrong with the system. We'll bulldoze it, and that's it, no more housing," walking away from a basic responsibility government has. Government has a responsibility to help the vulnerable, and part of helping the vulnerable is to give them a decent roof over their heads, and now they've said, "No more co-op housing, no more subsidized housing." In fact, this government has down-loaded, and is about to completely download, social housing on to the municipalities, the most disgusting thing this government or any government has done to housing in probably the last 50 years. They have off-loaded housing that they know is in dire need of infrastructure investment.

They themselves admit it. Here is a news release from the province of Ontario, "Leach Introduces Tenant Protection Act." He says, "Many tenants are forced to live in housing that is crumbling and requires billions of dollars in repairs." What are they going to do with that housing? They're going to download it on to municipalities that are going to have to make decisions on whether they repair the crumbling housing or repair the crumbling roads or pick up the garbage.

This government is downloading affordable housing and housing responsibilities on to the lowest tier, local municipalities. You can imagine what's going to transpire with these local governments all across Ontario, from

Listowel to London to New Liskeard. They're going to be asked to care for the housing units, and as the minister says, they're going to have to put up billions of dollars in repairs.

The government says this bill, the landlord protection act, is going to improve the quality and maintenance of these buildings. That is a direct contradiction, because this government knows they are going to download this mess. The tragedy of it is it's people who need the housing who are going to be the victims of this downloading of responsibility. They are going to be the scapegoats for the government's neo-conservative off-loading agenda which benefits only the few at the top.

1650

It's so clear. Talk to any tenants' group across Metro, whether it be in York Mills or Don Mills, any part of Metro. Ask the tenants' association, "Do you want this bill?" Ask them what they've said. If you're in your own riding, ask the tenants' association, "Do you want rent controls dismantled as this bill proposes to do?" None of them do. Who are they listening to? I think it's apparent they're listening, as usual, to the few they favour, and they will bulldoze over tenants or any other group if they feel they're pleasing their masters.

That's what this government is doing. Again, the motto of the Mike Harris government: "We do what we want. We don't give a darn. We do it anyway because we have a majority government. Therefore, we do what we want." There's no other bill — there are a couple of others, but this is typical of their attitude, and this rental destruction bill is so typical.

Then there is one other myth they throw out there: This is going to increase the supply of housing, of rental accommodation. This government knows that in British Columbia when they took off rent controls this did not take place. If you go to British Columbia, if you go to Vancouver, you can see what happens there. They've got the highest rents probably in Canada. They've got one of the lowest vacancy rates in Canada in BC cities where they took away rent controls. This government knows this is not about producing more housing, because if they were interested in producing more housing, they wouldn't have abandoned the social housing investment other governments thought was important. They walked away from that.

This government knows there are 34,000 households in Metro alone on the waiting list to get into subsidized housing. Is this bill going to help house those 34,000 households? I doubt it, because along with their walking away from their investment in social housing, in affordable housing, this is going to be a double whammy to families who need affordable housing, because this government doesn't really care about affordable housing. All this government really cares about is reaching its ideological agenda so they can brag to their friends and say: "Hey, look what we did. We got rid of another piece of legislation that belonged to someone else," that belonged to the red Tories or to the NDP or to the Liberals, "Look what we did."

They'll brag about that. They don't care about the damage to human beings. That's the least of their concern, because through their propaganda, through their

doublespeak, they think because they changed the name of the bill to the tenant protection bill, they can fool people. But you're not fooling the tenants. Tenants in every municipality across Ontario know you're their enemy. They know you're pleasing just your favourite few friends. That's what you're doing with this bill.

The tenants know your game, and that's why when they came to the hearings on the white paper, they universally said they didn't want this piece of legislation introduced, but you're going to do it anyway because you think you have the power and you think you're going to please your rich friends by doing this.

There are a lot of people who during the last election will remember when you went door to door — even in the by-election in York South just a year ago, I remember the candidates going door to door saying: "Vote for us in the by-election. We're going to preserve rent control. We're not going to touch it." I think even their members here in the House went door to door in York South in the apartment buildings saying: "Oh, no. We're not going to touch rent control." Can you imagine if you went through the city of Toronto, Madam Speaker — you're familiar with that — going door to door as a Conservative candidate saying you were going to get rid of rent control? They'd throw you out the door. You wouldn't have got a vote in half the ridings — never mind half — almost all of them, if you had said in 1995, in the election in June you were going to do this to tenants.

Now that you have the majority we're seeing your true colours, where you're going to attack tenants whom you promised you would protect. All of a sudden, you feel somehow you didn't make that commitment, but the tenants will not forget. The seniors especially will never forget what you're doing to their sense of security. Because in many of these apartments, which I know the minister likes talking about as being places you wouldn't live in, there are some very nice, neat little apartments throughout our city, throughout Metro, that tenants on meagre incomes, especially seniors on meagre pensions — they like living in those units but they don't like the threat now hanging over their head of some landlord, because you've given them the incentive, if they push people out of an apartment, they're going to make money off it. You're doing something that is really objectionable in terms of giving people a sense of comfort in their own little apartments for the most part. That is not right and it's something you didn't promise in the last election.

Also, the interesting thing — we had a meeting in north Toronto about rent control and about this bill, and I remember one of the city of Toronto councillors and the local MPP, Mr Saunderson, were there. We asked him, "What about the rent registry?" where you record the rent of each apartment, what it was in dollars and cents. "Are you going to keep the rent registry so when the new person comes in they get an idea of what the rent was that the old tenant paid?" "Oh no, we're going to get rid of the rent registry." So you're not going to know what the previous rent was. There's no way of checking it.

The other thing is the minister says, "We're going to do something about property taxes in apartments." There's a real problem there, though. There's no pass-through mechanism, so if property taxes are lowered on

an apartment, there's no compulsion in this legislation to ensure that the lower property tax goes to the tenant. There's no pass-through mechanism where they get the reduction, so you leave it up to the landlord to notify, and out of his or her good graces to do it. Those lower property taxes on apartments may never be seen by the tenant, but you can rest assured those higher costs will be passed through to the tenants. The tenants, again, are usually, in most cases, people who cannot afford any more increases, especially in their basic accommodation.

The other big threat: If you recall, in the early 1980s the developers were going crazy in Toronto. They thought they could really hit the mother lode by converting rental apartments, especially the good ones. I remember in my own area near Holy Rosary Church there was a series of very good apartments, very affordable, on the subway line. A couple of wheeler-dealer developers came in there and said, "We're going to convert these to condos," and luckily there was legislation put in which stopped the conversion of rental to condominium. As you know, the rationale was that sure, there are some people who can afford to maybe move from a rental situation into a condo type of situation, but there are a lot who cannot. They cannot afford to find the \$50,000 or \$100,000 or \$200,000 all of a sudden to become an owner, because they may be on pension, they may be out of work.

This conversion proviso in this bill is another threat, and the apartments which get threatened there are usually the most desirable, the best-kept. All these apartments are going to have the threat of condo conversion over their heads because of this legislation, because it makes it easier.

There was another game that was being played in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Toronto, and that was the Hell's Angels caper, I used to call it. They used to move a few bikers into one of your local apartments, trying to encourage the other tenants to move. This is probably going to come back again because this bill gives more impetus to demolishing existing buildings. Now, demolition of apartment units is very difficult. This is going to make it much easier to do that.

Here's a poor senior or a single parent in an apartment, who now has the threat of being pushed out because the landlord gets a bonus for getting you out of the apartment.

Mr Michael Brown: A bounty.

1700

Mr Colle: A bounty, the Mike Harris bounty for getting you out of the apartment, and on top of that, the threat of being converted into a condo, which they can't afford to do, and then the threat of being bulldozed literally and the apartment building being demolished. They will probably do that, because there may be a nice five-storey walkup or a three-storey walkup in a very good area. They'll bulldoze that building and put up a 15-storey condo or something.

That is the threat of Bill 96. That is the new Ontario of Mike Harris and the Conservatives that they didn't promise in the last election because they knew quite well they wouldn't have got any seats in Metro if they had gone door to door saying they were going to convert

rental to condo, they were going to bulldoze rental accommodation and they were going to remove rent control.

That's what this is. This is the removal of rental protection by a thousand cuts. Over the next four or five years we are going to see a basic destruction of affordable housing, especially in cities like Metropolitan Toronto, Ottawa and other large centres. It is really an attack on the most vulnerable, as simple as that. This government knows who lives in these units. They know that for the most part they are people who need a bit of help, they are people who through no fault of their own may be on pension.

This government, in this bill, even goes so far as to amend the Human Rights Code to make it easier to stop people from going into affordable housing. Even the Ontario human rights commissioner, a good old Tory, I think his name is Norton — Al Leach used to work for Keith Norton at one time. Here's Al Leach's former boss saying: "Hey, what you're doing here is a threat to basic rights. It is discrimination against people, who now have to have more income maintenance information. That is essentially against the basic rights that Ontarians have."

Here is Keith Norton saying of section 200 of Bill 96, "Get rid of it," because you're threatening their human rights. So not only does this bill threaten people's economic livelihood, now they're going to do this witchhunt for people on limited incomes, because they're going to do more income checks. Keith Norton, Al Leach's former boss, says this is wrong. It's not the opposition Liberals or NDP saying it; it's Keith Norton, a lifelong Tory saying you're threatening their basic rights with this piece of legislation.

How clear can it be that this government doesn't really care? They will even amend the Human Rights Code to get their way for their friends. That is one of the most despicable parts of a despicable bill that is being introduced.

We must not forget that this government is not interested in helping tenants. In fact, there is not even a quorum here in the House. I don't know where they are. At the Albany Club? I call for a quorum. Ring down to the Albany Club. Get them back here. There should be a quorum here, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, is there a quorum?

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Oakwood, you can continue.

Mr Colle: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for bringing the government back from the Albany Club so they can find out what's going on with tenants in this province. I think maybe that's what this government is doing that's wrong. It's not listening to the real grass-roots Conservatives. It's listening to too many of the whiz kids. The whiz kids probably have never had to pay rent, they've never had to struggle. They've gone through life with a silver spoon in their mouth. Maybe they don't know what it's like to have to meet next month's rent. I wonder if the whiz kids who wrote this bill ever lived in rental accommodation. That's what I wonder.

I don't know if they've got any apartments in Listowel, but I bet you if people from Listowel wrote this bill — they're probably a lot more down to earth than the whiz kids who wrote this piece of legislation. It would probably at least protect our seniors — even to do that — or single parents who are in apartments. But the whiz kids don't care about that. All they care about is being patted on the back when they go down to the Albany Club. "Who did you hit today?" That's what the whiz kids are all about.

We have to try to appeal to old-time Conservatives, who have got to stop and say, "Why are we doing this to the most vulnerable in our province?" whose income, generally speaking, is about half of what a homeowner's income is. Why do we have to do this? What is the purpose of dismantling rent control? Whom does it help? Does it build more housing? We know it doesn't do that. It doesn't build any more housing.

Does it do anything in terms of the economy? I don't really know because there are no impact studies. What does this do to ordinary seniors and people who are living on the margin when you increase their rent? This government doesn't even know how high that rent's going to be. We could be faced in some cities with a rent explosion a year from now or two years from now. The government doesn't know. No one has asked for those documents.

What does it do to people's ability to survive in an economy that is troublesome at best, an economy that is sporadic, an economy certainly that's not very good for a majority of tenants, as I said, who are single parents, seniors and the very young. Think of all the children who live in affordable housing. You're not only threatening the adults; in most apartments there are children.

I'll give you one example of what's happening. There is a severe shortage of housing. This government should recognize that. I went into a small, little home on Sanderstead Avenue in my own ward, a small, little bungalow, where you've got a retired couple who have a son living with them who's not well, and they have a daughter who moved back home with her husband who's out of work. She just had twins. They're living in a basement cold storage room. There is a waiting list so long for housing in Metro, they can't get into affordable housing: Metro housing, MTHA, Cityhome. They can't get in because this government closed the door on social housing. Is this bill going to help that couple who are out of work and who have those twins — two baby boys, they were about three months old when I saw them, they were born prematurely too — living a cold storage room in the basement of a house on Sanderstead Avenue in the city of York?

Will this bill do anything for those two little babies? Will this bill help at all to provide a job for the father or the mother? I doubt it. Will this bill relieve the anxiety of the grandparents, who are already taking care of a disabled son who is 30 years of age in that little bungalow? I don't think so. That's why this bill is a regressive bill that doesn't make any kind of sense. It is not a just bill. In fact it is just the opposite. It's an unjust bill that makes no sense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

1710

Mr Marchese: I want to thank the member for Oakwood for the comments he has made. They are in agreement with the comments that we have made on this side. I want to raise some of those issues again because the member for York Mills certainly has raised my ire this afternoon and I want to pick up on some of those things he addressed because they relate to what the member for Oakwood has touched on as well.

I would remind the member for York Mills about several things, because he said the people who stay in their apartments are protected, they have nothing to worry about. But they do, for several reasons. Seventy per cent of all tenants move within a five-year period. That means effectively rent control is dead, it's killed. Seventy per cent move within a five-year period. Once they know this bill will affect them, they're going to stay in their apartments. If they stay, they're sitting ducks. The member for York Mills says they're not affected but they are. I want to explain briefly and clearly why.

First, they're subject to the guideline increase of 2.8%. Everybody gets that; it's a guideline increase. Then they get the 3% cap that we put for capital repairs, but they've added 1% more. The member for York Mills doesn't speak to that. That's 4%, so that's 6.8%. Then the pass-through, which the member for York Mills speaks of as modest. The pass-through passes on property taxes and utility bills. That's not modest. It's going to be hell by the time this government gets through with municipalities. Property taxes are going to skyrocket and tenants are going to pay a deep price.

I'm saying to tenants, your homes are in jeopardy with this Reform-minded, Conservative government that we've got. You're in jeopardy and you need to fight back. You need to write to the minister, private and confidential, saying: "What you're doing is wrong. Restore what we've got, keep what we've got, because that's the best protection we've got." Fight back against this government.

Mr Gilchrist: It's my pleasure to rise to comment on the address by the member for Oakwood, who I think, along with the member from the NDP who spoke earlier, has misinterpreted the initials of this act. It's the Tenant Protection Act, not the Totally Pessimistic Attitude. I know that is what you've brought to this House for every bill that we've debated so far this year. Maybe, just maybe, in the course of the debate you might cite a specific section of the bill rather than dealing in the kind of over-the-top rhetoric that has absolutely no relation to what we should be doing in this chamber, which is dealing with the substance of the bills. Let's just remind people at home what exactly the five premises of this bill are.

First, we want to protect tenants from unfair rent increases and arbitrary increases. To that effect, we're preserving exactly the same percentage rent increase as is the case today: 2.8%.

Second, we want to improve maintenance and get tough on landlords who fail to take care of their buildings, who have left the rental stock in the condition it is today precisely because of what you didn't do during your five years, and your five years, in office. We want to create a climate where people will invest in new housing.

Let's talk about how attractive it was under the NDP. In 1995 in Metro Toronto — that's the Metro Toronto that 50,000 more people moved to that year — there were 25 apartment units — not buildings but units — built in Metro Toronto. Small wonder we have more demand than we have supply.

We want to streamline the administration and cut red tape to create a faster, fairer system dealing with disputes between landlords and tenants.

Finally, we want to make sure that in this part of the government's operations, as with all the bills we bring forward, there is a renewed spirit of optimism that both tenants and landlords will share as we move forward to a more prosperous Ontario.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): First of all, the comment that I'd like to make is, why aren't we discussing the flying wheel bill? It's a matter that —

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. The comments and questions are to the member for Oakwood's speech.

Mr Gerretsen: But Mr Speaker, it's done through you, and he talked about this as well. That's what we should be debating here today, because after all, that's what the people who are using the roads are very concerned about, especially when you take into account the number of people who have died.

Second, I would just very quickly like to refer again to the letter from Mr Norton, who is the chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Mr Norton at one time was a member, as a matter of fact for the same riding I now represent, and he indeed was a very good member. Of course, he was a member of a Conservative government, not a Reform government. But let me just very quickly remind you what he says in his letter to the government. It says:

"I am writing to you about the proposed amendments set out in Bill 96.... Bill 96 raises concerns that I would like to bring to your immediate attention.

"The commission is aware that the landlords' associations have been lobbying the government to introduce changes that will allow landlords to screen tenants using income information that is used to evaluate ability and willingness to pay rent. Any regulations that may be promulgated to this effect will raise serious human rights issues for seniors, single parents and persons who are receiving public assistance."

He ends his letter by saying, "It would indeed be unfortunate if some of the most disadvantaged among Ontarians were subject to the additional burden of legislation that effectively allows landlords to 'opt out' of basic human rights standards."

I wish this government would take these matters into consideration. This, after all, is from a former cabinet minister who used to serve on the opposite side.

These are the real concerns we're talking about. What about the human rights of tenants who are in the apartments of Ontario, who want to get some protection rather than being attacked by the bill that is presently before us?

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): The member for Oakwood in his remarks made it clear that tenants are going to get whacked by this government under this bill and are losing a whole number of rights that are currently

in place for them under the act now in place. Let's take a look at some of those rights and reinforce that very issue.

First of all, the rent registry: eliminated, gone. It reminds me of how this government is going to deal with the HSTAP, which tried to connect health care workers to health care jobs. How are tenants going to know what's available to them when that registry is gone? They won't. They'll be out on the street.

Gone: rebates on rent. Under the current law you can go back six years and apply for a rebate. Under the changes this government wants to bring in, you'll only be able to go back for a year. Where's the fairness in that?

Under the current law, there's a provision for costs no longer borne. If as a landlord you bought a new fridge and it was part of your rent and it became paid off, then of course that cost no longer appeared in your rent. That's now going to be gone, so those additional costs continue in the estimation of your rent on and on, month after month, even when that's paid off.

You used to be able to get an order to prohibit a rent increase if there was a property standards violation by the landlord. That's now gone. The government says, "We'll fine the landlords a bit more." Well, there's not enough property standards staff to make that happen, so any kind of effect it might have to try to force people to get rid of the violations and clean up their act — that's now gone.

I heard the member for York Mills earlier say: "Tenants who stay in their apartments now are protected. This legislation has no impact." I don't know what planet he's living on. For goodness' sake, any number of bad landlords are going to do everything under their power to try to evict tenants so they can raise that rent in that rental unit. That's going to happen. We know that. We also know that 70% of tenants move every five years, so as soon as they move and they're looking for something else, they're going to get hit again.

This is bad for tenants. It only helps the friends of these people: the big developers, the big landlords.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Oakwood for two minutes to respond.

Mr Colle: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues. The member for Fort York has, I think, door-to-door experience of what this bill is really going to mean to ordinary people, and I certainly know of his sincerity in his feelings.

The member for Scarborough East — how can he say in all honesty that he feels the Tories are going to get tough on landlords? Who believes this Mike Harris government is going to get tough on them? I'm sure landlords all over this province are shaking in their boots, saying, "We're afraid of Mike Harris."

My colleague the member for Kingston and the Islands pointed out a very specific part of this bill, section 200, which attacks basic human rights. It allows the government to opt out of basic Human Rights Code protections. The former member Keith Norton is saying that as the human rights commissioner. How specific can you get about what's wrong with this bill?

The member for Sudbury East talked about what's going to happen to property standards. In essence, this bill is a free-for-all. It essentially gives a green light to

the worst landlords, those landlords who will take advantage of — this bill has got more loopholes than the Bre-X stock. This is what this bill is going to do. As I said at the beginning, it really puts a bounty on every apartment unit in Ontario, because it's going to encourage bad landlords to intimidate and push seniors, the young and the vulnerable out of their units so they can get a higher rent. It's bad legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Riverdale.

1720

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Thank you, Chair, and I thank you for switching the chair with me today so I could participate in the debate. I appreciate that.

The first thing I'm going to talk about in this odious piece of legislation, because I am so completely offended by it, is the issue that my Liberal colleague from Oakwood has talked about quite a lot today, and that is that the amendment to this bill would amend the Ontario Human Rights Code to allow the landlords to not rent to certain people — yes, people — in our province.

The landlords will now be allowed, after this bill passes with this amendment, to refuse to rent to people on social assistance and other disadvantaged groups on the basis of what they call income information. What this means is that single mothers trying to get back to school, trying to get a job, or just there taking care of their children, may be turned down by landlords because they're now allowed to do this income test. What a terrible signal that is for this government to be sending to the poor people of the province.

Mr Gilchrist: If you can pay the rent, the landlord will take you.

Ms Churley: The member for Scarborough East has already begun. I believe what he said was, "If you don't pay your rent, you shouldn't be allowed to rent." Who's to say that people on social assistance don't pay their rent?

Mr Gilchrist: You did. I didn't say that.

Ms Churley: There are people from all layers of society, from the lowest income to the highest income, who create scams, who cheat the tax system.

Mr Gilchrist: Don't put words in my mouth. Shame on you. You should be ashamed.

Ms Churley: Speaker —

Mr Gilchrist: Oh, you don't like it when it's the other way around, eh? You have a little trouble with that.

Ms Churley: These people, Speaker, are discriminating against the poor people of this province. They are through this bill, through this amendment, discriminating against poor people in this province. They are now allowing people —

Mr Gilchrist: You are saying that, not the bill. The bill does not say that.

Ms Churley: Member for Scarborough East, I know I'm not in the chair, but this is really getting out of hand.

What I'm talking about — and I think the member for Scarborough East should listen for a moment. I've been there. I don't know if there are people in your caucus who have been there. I have been a single parent on mother's allowance for a while. The system that existed was quite necessary for me at that time. I have a lot of

friends who are on social assistance who are single parents. I don't know how I would have felt during that difficult time in my life — and it was a short time — if I was in a situation where I would go to rent an apartment for my daughter and me and find out that I couldn't rent that apartment because I was on social assistance.

That is so absolutely disgusting, so low that it is almost unbelievable that you people can sit over there and allow this to happen. It is straightforward discrimination and it is absolutely disgusting, and you should know better. What you are saying to the landlords is, "If you find out somebody is on social assistance" — and who knows what else it means? — "low-income, disadvantaged, you can say no to them." It doesn't matter that they may have a perfect record.

Mr Christopherson: The disabled and seniors.

Ms Churley: Yes, the disabled and seniors, absolutely. But we know which kind of people will mostly be discriminated against. It will be single moms. It will be people from other countries, new Canadians, immigrants. I think some seniors might experience discrimination, but we know what this is really all about and we know which sorts of people will be discriminated against. This is ripe for the possibility of racism.

This is a very dangerous amendment. If you do nothing else with this bill, please withdraw that. You've got a letter from the human rights commissioner telling you it is discriminatory. Don't do it. Don't do this to our province at this time when over the past 40 years we've been making slow but steady advancements in trying to deal with racism, trying to create laws that help people who are experiencing racism, trying to create opportunities for poor people and disadvantaged people, trying to make sure they have a place to live.

This government is taking such a regressive, terrible step backwards because the landlords want to have that choice. I believe landlords should have the opportunity to feel comfortable that whomever that landlord is renting to is going to pay their rent. But I can guarantee you that there will be discrimination here and there will be people who will have a very hard time finding a home. I urge the government to withdraw it.

On top of this, at the same time the government is getting rid of, destroying, rent control in Ontario, they're also getting out of social housing. The people on the waiting lists — I believe it's something like 7,000 now; I'm not quite sure of the number — many of whom are trying to get into some form of social housing, are looking for rent subsidies, for assistance. That's going to go as well.

Here we have a double whammy. We have a situation where some disadvantaged people will be discriminated against when they try to rent an apartment, and it's going to become impossible in the very near future for those same people to get any form of social housing. This government has stopped building any new co-op or social housing, and furthermore, they're in the process of downloading all the existing housing stock to the municipality, which obviously will not be able to afford the upkeep, the maintenance, the infrastructure. We know subsidies are going to start going down the tubes.

These are the kinds of things that are happening at a time when unemployment is really high. Despite what

this government said, that their tax cut for the rich is going to create jobs, we haven't seen it happening yet. We haven't seen any training programs put in place for disadvantaged people. "The tax cut for the rich is going to get them a job. Don't worry." Well, we haven't seen that kind of thing happen yet, and here we have a situation that is going to create even more hardship for those disadvantaged people.

I wish the backbenchers in this government would take a good look at what they're really doing in this bill. I heard them today and I hear them now standing up defending it, saying over and over, "It's going to be better for tenants." They can't have read the bill. They can't be listening. They can't be listening to the thousands of tenants who have spoken out against this bill, who have analysed the bill. It's not just us talking. They're telling you: "This is going to be a disaster for tenants in Ontario. Don't do it." They just don't listen. They are determined to move ahead and, in the process of moving ahead, put on blinders, will not listen to the impact this is going to have on the renters of Ontario.

I've been spending some time in East York talking to people, to tenants in a rather low-income high-rise area. Some of the buildings are in fairly good shape and others are in very bad repair. It would be interesting for some of these members to go take a tour of buildings like this in their own ridings or in East York or whatever and talk to the people who live there. I met seniors, I met all kinds of new Canadians, of all different nationalities, some of whom are in the process of learning English; some in the process of going back to school; some are landed immigrants; some have just become citizens; many young families — all kinds of people from all walks of life in those apartment buildings. The thing they all have in common is that generally they are low-income. That is one of the common threads that holds them there. They can't afford for the rents to go up.

1730

For some of the people I talked to — and they showed me — the balconies in their apartment buildings have been in such disrepair for so long that they've had to bar them from their children. They're terrified all the time that their children are going to find a way on to those balconies. The balconies are in such disrepair that they are dangerous.

The landlord in one particular building, the one I'm talking about, has for several years refused to repair the balconies and has for several years refused to paint the peeling walls and do a lot of the other very necessary repairs that need to be done. That is where I draw the line: when you see people, good people like this, trying to get on with their lives, trying to raise a family, paying their rent and finding the buildings in such disrepair because the landlords don't care.

Under the NDP legislation, at least their rents were frozen. In most of the buildings I went into, I heard stories from people who said, "Until the rent got frozen, our buildings were in similar shape," but it forced the landlords to fix them so they could get the guideline rent increase. In one building, which I just discussed, the landlord had not bothered and clearly, for whatever reason, is not concerned about it and has just taken the

freeze for now. People in that building are quite worried about what happens to them after that's lifted, because the landlord will then be able to get away with leaving the building as it is and jacking up the rents.

Today I invite all the tenants, the over one million tenants of Ontario, to stand up and fight back against this. I've talked to a few people, just a few, who've said: "This government just doesn't listen. What's the point? They're going to do it anyway. Look what they did on megacity."

Well, yes, they finally rammed it through, but they had to make some changes to the downloading. They made a mistake in the long session we had in the committee of the whole and voted for an amendment they were supposed to vote against. There were some victories in that. Also, I think it taught them a bit of a lesson.

I say to people: Don't give up. Fight back. Don't wait for the next election so you can throw the rascals out. That's too late. Stop them now. Fight back. Don't make it easy for them. Write your letters. Come down here. Get involved with other groups which are fighting this government for taking away their democratic rights, taking away the workers' rights, labour laws, taking away their environmental laws and on and on and on. Fight back. Don't take it.

I've also talked to people who say, shamefacedly now, that they heard some of the Tories in the election campaign, people like Bill Saunderson, the member for Eglinton, and others say they were not only going to preserve rent control but were going to make it better for tenants. They heard that and believed it. They're embarrassed about it now.

I've talked to young families that had one young child and were expecting another. They're terrified because they know they're going to need a bigger place soon — not quite yet, they can't afford it quite yet, but they're waiting for the day fairly soon when they're going to have to move. They're aware that when they move they're going to be in a situation where they're going to be at the mercy of the market, and there's nobody there to protect them.

Some of those people I talked to would fall under this amendment. They may be refused a decent apartment because they may be on welfare or new refugees who haven't made it into the labour force yet or a poor senior. These people have a double whammy here. The poorer you are and the more disadvantaged you are, the more difficult it is going to be to find affordable, and I use the word "decent," housing. Why should a poor person be forced to live in a musty, mouldy, dirty little bachelor apartment in bad repair for \$200 a month or \$400 a month or whatever it costs? And sometimes it's more than one person; sometimes families are crammed into little, dirty, grungy apartments because it's all they can afford, even in this economic climate and marketplace today with rent control in place. Some people are so poor, that's all they can afford. Why should they have to live there? Why shouldn't poor people be given an opportunity to live in decent, affordable housing?

I hear members from the Tory benches complain about co-op housing and social housing, that it costs so much to build, and there's the odd, so-called scandal hauled out

here and there. Nobody mentions the thousands upon thousands of co-op and social housing units in Ontario, all over the province — in their own ridings, up north, in Toronto, all over — that were built with extreme caution, built in a financially stable way, and that help people. Co-op housing is a wonderful opportunity for single parents, for instance, for lonely seniors. Co-op housing is also a community where people get together as neighbours and work together to run the co-op and learn and move on from there.

When I hear these members criticize all forms of social housing and say, "Let the marketplace take care of it," I get really, really worried. The reason that over the past 30 years or so the Davis Tories started to deal with rent controls and social housing and then the Liberals — the member for Scarborough North was the housing minister for a while; he'll remember this well — was that we had a horrible housing crisis in Ontario. We did. Remember? It was the number one issue in this House. I remember the previous minister, before the member for Scarborough North, I believe, Chaviva Hošek, who has moved on to bigger and better things in Ottawa these days.

That was the issue for months on end, maybe a few years. There was a crisis in Metro Toronto. There wasn't enough social housing and there weren't enough rental units available for low-income people. There was a crisis because of some of the issues that some of my colleagues talked about earlier. Developers were buying up, gobbling up buildings and tearing them down and building high-rises, building condos. Nobody was building affordable accommodation.

We can see the writing on the wall here. We've been there before, except it's going to be much worse now. This is a downward spiral. There is going to be a real crisis in affordable housing in this province. It's starting now and it's going to get worse over the next — it will take a while. As with all this very destructive, anti-community, anti-people legislation, we're not going to see it tomorrow. It's going to unfold over the next several years, and then whichever party is in power is going to be dealing with a crisis again.

What we have to remember when we talk about crises in the sometime abstraction of debate in this place is that we're talking about real people. Sometimes it's hard to visualize these real people, and that's why it's so important to get out in those high-rises, to get out in those apartments and talk to people and hear their stories, see the way they're living, see their concern and their fear. That's what I would urge all members to do.

1740

When I talk to tenants in high-rises in East York and in my riding of Riverdale — and I have been to some of the more upscale buildings, with not really wealthy people living in them but buildings where people are a little better off than others, but many of whom are on fixed incomes or haven't had a raise for a while and don't expect one. Some are afraid they're going to lose their jobs, like the majority of people in Ontario these days. There's a lot of insecurity, and they take no comfort whatsoever when they're told: "Oh, it's okay. As long as you're in your apartment your rent will only go up by the guidelines."

I heard my colleague from Fort York say earlier that there's going to be a higher rent increase under the guidelines now, so they can count on higher rent even there. But they don't feel comforted when they're told, "Don't worry, as long as you don't move, you won't be touched by this," because they're afraid of harassment and they're afraid that for all kinds of reasons they will have to move, for reasons I outlined earlier. Some of my colleagues were saying earlier that about 80% of tenants move over five years.

We know this is really the demise of rent control. We know that, we see it coming, yet the government members won't listen to the tenants, won't listen to the opposition, won't listen to the experts in the field. They're letting it happen right under their noses. They will have to deal with this legacy someday because they're the cause of it, but right now, why look it in the face, why stare the results of this crass and very nasty piece of legislation in the face right now? You can't see it right now; you can avoid talking to tenants, all in all.

You can just go to big landlord meetings, and the minister can stand up and say, "Rent control has got to go," which is what he said. He can have all these people clapping and cheering and telling him what a wonderful fellow he is, and they can come to his and the Premier's fund-raisers and can make their donations. For now, that's all these government members have to do. But come the next election, especially those who have high-rises or even low-density but a lot of apartments in their ridings, if they want to get re-elected they're going to have to face these people and then they're going to see what people have to say. But I know for the time being they're not listening.

These people are sitting ducks, not sitting tenants. They're waiting.

Mrs Marland: Quack, quack.

Ms Churley: The member for Mississauga South is saying, "Quack, quack." Under normal circumstances I would find it cute and I would find it funny, but not now, because I have just been visiting some of these sitting ducks in the last couple of weeks. I see their faces in front of me. I see the little children and I see the real people. When you get out there and talk to the real people who are going to be affected by your legislation, it's hard to have a sense of humour when you're discussing the issue. There are those who might say that I sound just a tad self-righteous and a tad too emotional about it. I suppose I would admit that perhaps that's true, but I certainly cannot find anything amusing whatsoever in this discussion.

I suppose that when I sound a bit sad and disgusted and sometimes overwhelmed and emotional about this issue, it's because, as I said earlier, we all bring our own experiences to this place. Like all of you, I have a wealth of experience in different areas, and I bring that experience and my life experience to this place. I bring it to the way I deal with policies, the way I deal with issues, the way I analyse what's going to happen. We all do that.

As I said earlier, one aspect of my life is having been a poor person and having to raise a child for a while on my own and feeling very lucky that I had good friends

and good opportunities, in a large part because of the social fabric, the social assistance, the community assistance that used to exist that this government is tearing down.

I know from my experience how very difficult it is for single moms trying to get back in the workforce or back in school or just to make it, just to feed their kids. It's a lot harder now, because those who are on welfare have been cut way back. Single mothers now have to go off assistance and get a student loan to even go back to school. Many of them are terrified of that because they can't even get grants. The most disadvantaged in our society are very worried about what's happening to the social structure that had been built up for many years around us. It's being collapsed by this government, and it's really shameful.

Now on top of all the other legislation and policy changes and deregulation and cuts throughout all the ministries in this province, on top of all the cuts to all kinds of services that the more disadvantaged in our society rely on, none of that is enough. They haven't helped enough of their friends yet. They've got a long list: "Landlords — tick. We're almost there. We can almost tick that one off, can't we?" Where do tenants fit into this? Tenants aren't on their list; it's the landlords who are on their list, and that's about to be ticked off, just like the big bosses.

My colleague from Hamilton Centre is here. As our labour critic, he has watched this government do the same thing with ordinary workers and their rights.

As the critic for women's issues, I've watched cuts, I've watched second-stage housing closed down. Again, the more vulnerable you are, the more you are hurt, time after time after time, by this government's legislation and cuts and changes.

I find it really distressing. I find it extremely distressing. We don't just have interesting policy debates in this place. Sometimes what we are debating about — and sometimes we joke; after all, it's where we work, and we talk back and forth. But I have to tell you that there are times when I feel most distressed and most depressed and sometimes absolutely furious about what this band of robbers can do. They come into this place and they give a tax cut to the rich. They have a list of their friends that they made promises to before the election and they're going down the list one by one. They don't care who gets in the way; they're just ticking each one as they go along.

I wonder who else is left on that list. I'm afraid to think who else is left on that list, because I can tell you, it isn't the most vulnerable in our society and it isn't the ordinary worker who's out there making a buck and supporting his or her family. It's not the children in our society. Look what's happening to education and child care, the family support plan, you name it — run the gamut. We know what's going on here.

That's why I find it so distressing. We can see it happening. We can see it all slipping away. The Tories and Liberals and New Democrats and people out there from all the parties, the activists who are referred to these days as special-interest groups, those are the people who

built the kind of caring society we have now, those so-called special interests, and they're being shafted. Everything they've built up over the last 20 years is going down the tubes.

That is what's happening with rent control. For years and years and years, tenants were being shafted. There were some good landlords, but there were no protections. For many years, tenant activists, those so-called special interests, worked with different levels of government and different parties and built up over the years the kind of tenant protection we have today. When our government came into power, we brought in the toughest rent control, I believe, in Canada. Yes, we picked sides. We chose to support and protect the tenants in this province. This government did what they usually do: They picked sides and they came down squarely on the side of the big landlord. Shame.

1750

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mrs Marland: It's always very difficult to sit in this House and listen to the kinds of arguments the New Democratic Party makes. They would have the public believe that they have the corner on compassion, have the corner on caring. For the member for Riverdale to talk about what this province has done and how it's been built over the last 20 years — I say to that member, this province has been built over the last 130 years. We have had 130 years of every single political party that has served in this House doing the best they possibly could for the people of this province, and no party has the corner on compassion or the corner on caring, as you would suggest.

Your arguments simply are false, your arguments about what we do for the rich and what we do for the people who do not have as much money. You fail to mention, of course, that we have a health care levy paid for by the people in the higher income brackets. You never talk about that.

To deal more correctly with the bill that's before us, which is really what you were supposed to be talking about, if we had the kind of money that we could have to spend on everybody who is vulnerable in this province, the kind of money we could have if we were not spending 20 cents out of every dollar on interest on money we borrowed to provide the programs because that government took the provincial deficit from \$48 billion to \$98 billion in one year — the NDP government doubled the provincial deficit. When we hand a cheque out today to any of these groups, it could be 20% higher to provide the programs we have if we weren't paying that kind of percentage on interest. So please stop fearmongering.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I would like to respond to the comments of the member for Riverdale who, as we all know, is quite sincere about what she says, quite knowledgeable when she approaches the topic and very concerned. I think the concern is what drives her most, because she is trying to somehow emphasize to this government that there are people out there who need protection, need a government who can understand. She drives that home, but sometimes I'm worried that the government is blocked in their thoughts to understand those issues.

I wonder if this government understands too that businesses today are having the highest profit in decades. One of the reasons they are enjoying this great profit is that workers are scared even to ask for an increase in pay. We get this downsizing, all this rhetoric that goes on, but profits are in the pockets of those who are better off, the rich.

Eaton's today is protected from bankruptcy, but somehow this government is trying to tell welfare people who have a house, "If you ever sell your home, you'd better pay off your debts here." They should tell Eaton's that kind of stuff, to pay off some of the small business people who are being ripped off under protection of bankruptcy.

We need the government to protect tenants and of course treat the landlords fairly, but they can always buy protection very easily through lawyers and access to justice. Tenants need protection. When the member for Mississauga South comes and says the NDP feel they have the corner on compassion, I think what the member for Riverdale is trying to say is that the bottom line we're looking at is not profit; the bottom line is human compassion and understanding that the government has a role to play in society. We need the government, any government, to protect them.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the remarks of my colleague the member for Riverdale. I thought it was interesting that she evoked quite a response from the Tory back benches when she started to zero in on the issue of this government liking to label people and groups as "special interests." We have said consistently here in the New Democratic Party caucus that this government, from the time the writ was dropped in 1995 to date, has done everything they can to put a label of "special interest" on whoever they're about to go after. By doing that, they can say that they are justified because there's some undue influence, some disproportionate amount of power that these special interest groups have.

But it's interesting. The government doesn't consider their developer and landlord pals to be special interests. Banks aren't special interests. The very, very wealthy aren't special interests. Yet who has a greater interest in the laws that are passed here than the very, very wealthy? Some of the most wealthy families in this province are represented in that very caucus, and I have no problem and neither does the member from Riverdale in saying, "That's a special interest."

The fact of the matter is, when the member for Riverdale talked about the comparison between going after tenants and going after workers, she's dead on. You're taking away from tenants and giving to landlords, just like you took \$15 billion away from injured workers and gave \$6 billion back to your corporate pals. And when we talk about the tax cut, I ask anybody watching here, how much of the tax cut are you really getting in terms of benefiting your life? If you make \$250,000 a year, you'd get \$15,000 for that tax cut, 15 Gs. Are you getting that kind of benefit? Ask yourself who the special interests are.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): It's interesting to make a few remarks, having listened to the mem-

ber for Riverdale in her presentation and some of the other speakers who have followed regarding whether there is sufficient tenant protection, that this bill has no tenant protection, vilifying people on one side or the other.

It would be interesting to point out that in this bill, or if you're talking about the whole condition of social, affordable housing today, whether you had this bill or the bill the new debtors party introduced back in the last five years — the member for Riverdale spoke quite eloquently, but not very knowledgeably, about the state of our tenant buildings today, and they're completely irrelevant comments as to whether you had this bill or another bill in terms of the types of landlords you have, both public and private sector, who don't look after their buildings very well. We know we have that situation whatever types of laws you have.

But to top it off, I thought the most curious thing is, in this whole set of remarks by the members of the opposition parties, not one of them mentioned the lack of tenant protection for those people who live in Cityhome-type buildings or government buildings where they're subject to no rent guidelines. If Cityhome wants to yank up the rent increase, they can do it by 15% or 20%. They don't even have to justify that to anybody in terms of the rent control folks we have downtown here. We're so concerned about tenant protection, it's absolutely shocking that this member for Riverdale would defend such a bureaucratically riddled, so-called tenant protection regime we've had for the last 20 years in this province, brought about by very many false pretences by that party over there.

1800

Ms Churley: I would like to respond to the members for Etobicoke-Rexdale, Hamilton Centre, Scarborough North and Mississauga South, last but of course not least.

All I'm really trying to say here today is that we all, as elected members, have an opportunity and indeed an obligation to protect the lower-income and the most vulnerable and the most disadvantaged in our society, and I want to thank the members for Hamilton Centre and Scarborough North for supporting me and my words here today.

I want to say to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale that my concern is tenant protection and I'd be happy to look at amendments with you if we could find some way together to get rid of the most offensive and odious parts of this bill.

There was a time when I thought the member for Mississauga South was one of the compassionate members of that bunch, and I will say to the member for Mississauga South that I know a lot of Tories who are compassionate, but I don't see any of them in this Legislature. I don't. I know Liberals who are compassionate, and New Democrats, so I don't claim to have the only corner. I am saying that these guys have lost their way. There is no compassion over there.

Finally, I would say to the member for Mississauga South, when she gets up and talks about the NDP government borrowing money, we borrowed money to keep people afloat during the worst recession since the 1930s. They're borrowing money to give rich people a tax break. Make your own judgements on that.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Essex South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs concerning assistance to flood victims. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister's parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I want to say at the outset that, notwithstanding the fact that this is called a debate, I prefer to handle this between the parliamentary assistant and me as a discussion of the very serious issue that has occurred on two events in Essex county recently, both on the shores bordering Lake St Clair and on the north shore of Lake Erie.

I want to point out to the members present some articles that have appeared in the Windsor Star recently:

"Waves Damage Mersea Township Breakwalls: Repairing the landscaping and fixing breakwalls could cost about \$10,000 to \$15,000 for each property affected."

"Flood Damage Reaches \$750,000." This is dated April 15. The previous one was dated April 9. "Flooding in Essex county has already caused \$750,000 damage this year, according to the Essex Region Conservation Authority."

May 2, I quote from an article headed: "Swamped Shoreline Residents Bail Out." A Mr Malone, a constituent of Essex South, says he has spent \$3,500 for shoreline protection earlier in the year and estimated the latest storm will cost him another \$3,000.

From the Windsor Star of May 5: "Area Flood Damage Tops \$1 Million: As with previous storms, Butch Mitchell of Cobby Marine in Mersea said he anticipates a flood of phone calls following last Thursday's storm, the second gale in three weeks."

That's why this is of great importance to the residents of Essex county bordering on the shores of Lake St Clair and Lake Erie. In my question of May 6, the one that I am objecting to the answer, or at least suggesting that the answer wasn't complete enough for me to be satisfied, was this: I simply asked the question, "Will you secure the funding for this loan assistance," which is under the Shoreline Property Assistance Act, "and help the flood victims in Essex and Kent county?"

The minister in answer said they had received a letter more than two weeks prior to that, which of course was from the township of Mersea, where the council of the township of Mersea endorsed a request to the province of Ontario requesting that the Shoreline Property Assistance Act loan program funding be reinstated.

I suspect the parliamentary assistant will say: "There's no money in that act. There's no money provided for that." That may be true. He will probably remind us that the money was taken away in 1988 or 1989 by a previous government. That too is true. But the fact of the matter is that the Shoreline Property Assistance Act is a legitimate piece of legislation that is still on the books. Even though

it's unfunded, we're simply asking that the minister provide funds so that loans can be made, so that repairs can be made, so that damage can be prevented in the future. They're looking under disaster assistance or emergency funding as well.

In some instances, grants would be logical and certainly would be accepted by the residents. In other instances, it may not be defined as a disaster, but certainly it's of concern to the residents that they protect their property for any future storm events that may occur.

That's where I'm suggesting the shoreline protection act, at the discretion of the minister, should be funded. Some, not all, are going to need grants; some are simply looking for loans to assist them to repair their property. That's what we're looking for.

That's all I'm asking the parliamentary assistant, in place of the minister, to do tonight: to assure the residents of Essex county that there will be funding available to help prevent future damage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member's time has expired.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): First of all, I'd like to say that the issue before us that we're debating this evening is the question that was asked on May 6 and the answer the minister gave. I think no one, from the presentation just made by the member across the aisle, is arguing the fact that there was considerable damage in Essex. I think the minister made that clear when he made the comment, "Everybody recognizes the amount of damage that was done as a result of those floods, and I will be glad to report back to the member after I have the response" from the staff. With that he suggested that a number of meetings and discussions were ongoing with the ministry staff and the local officials.

At that point the member opposite made the comment: "You haven't been meeting with anybody. You just sloughed it off. At least you could be honest about it." I think those were withdrawn, but they are still in the Hansard.

I want to point out that on May 12 the minister returned to the Legislature and informed the member: "I can tell you that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been touch with the representatives of the area municipalities. On April 11 and 14, our south-western regional office spoke to the clerk of Mersea township, the clerk of the village of Erieau, the treasurer of the village of Erie Beach and the clerk of the township of Dover."

Mr Crozier: That was prior to their letter of the 24th. That's what I was referring to.

Mr Hardeman: The question was whether the minister was meeting or having discussions with the local representatives. I think it's obvious from that he was.

I also have here a note that relates to a call —

Mr Crozier: He was discussing it before they raised it.

Mr Hardeman: I think the member opposite commented about the call that was made to the ministry and that he was good enough to be able to dial the phone and call the ministry. I guess it was to point out the abilities.

I have a note suggesting what conversation took place. "Mr Crozier explained that a member of his staff had not clearly understood that the ministry staff had been in contact with Mersea township staff and were advised that no immediate ministry action was requested. Mr Crozier closed the telephone conversation by asking the writer to extend his apologies to those who were involved in the confusion that the question had created."

I want to clear the record on the two different programs. A number of the municipalities have requested or are considering requesting — that's what the discussions are about — disaster relief funds to be provided to look after the disaster that occurred in their area.

The request from Mersea township is a request, I want to point out — I think it's very important — to reinstate the shoreline program and not to get funding from the program. In Mersea township they too realize that this program has not been utilized since 1988, when it was taken out of practical use by a former government. They realize that. They are asking the government to look at that, to reinstate that program so it can be utilized for the problems they have in that area. I want to point out that the ministry has been in contact with them to discuss these issues with the local municipalities to see what we can do to help them out.

It's very important that we go through — I have here for the record — all the people who were contacted; I'm not sure that's very important to the member opposite or to any members of the Legislature. We can all be sure that there have been a number of conversations held between municipalities and the ministry to deal with the issue at hand.

Last but not least I want to point out that if the program for shoreline rehabilitation was to be put back in place, it would be administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources, not the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. The reason it is under the auspices of municipal affairs is that the loans would be directed through municipalities, and it's for that reason it is with our ministry.

I think the minister made it quite clear that we need to find out what needs to be done and to see whether help can be provided for the communities in Essex county that have suffered through this disaster. He is doing that, and as he said on the two previous occasions, he will be reporting back when he has all the information from the ministries and provide as much assistance as possible to those people. He will be doing that as quickly as possible.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1812.

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Mercredi 14 mai 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 14 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 14 mai 1997

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

ESTIMATES

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the year ending 31 March 1998 and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): When the people in northern Ontario talk about last week's provincial budget, I can assure you that the major topic of discussion is not the tax-cutting policies of the Harris government. The reason is that the people in the north were actually hit with a massive tax increase instead.

The government would like the imposition of a new \$37 vehicle registration fee to be treated as a minor item that should draw little attention, but our research on what this tax grab will cost northerners is nothing less than shocking. For the district of Thunder Bay, this new tax will cost residents from Thunder Bay to Marathon and Thunder Bay to Longlac \$4.5 million every year. In Kenora-Rainy River, the tax grab takes \$2 million from our pockets.

The Minister of Northern Development would like to see this new tax as a way for us to pay our fair share for the cost of road improvements in the north. The minister should be ashamed of those comments. He knows full well that we pay our fair share every day at the pump when we fill up our tanks. The cost of gasoline is often 10 cents a litre, or more, more expensive in the north, and when you calculate that 25% of that fill-up goes directly to the provincial treasury down here at Queen's Park, it's clear that our contribution to road improvements and maintenance in the province is higher than anywhere else.

The fact is that the only way we would ever accept such a fee would be if the government equalized gas prices across the province. Until that happens, let me tell the Premier one thing: The people of northern Ontario will not forget this totally unjustified tax grab on northerners.

SEEKERS GIRLS VOLLEYBALL CLUB

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I'm proud today to bring to the attention of the House the accomplishments of the Seekers Girls Volleyball Club of the Hamilton area. They are not only the Ontario champions of 1997, but they are the gold medal winners for the eastern Canadian championships and we're very, very proud of their accomplishments.

The midget team roster for 1996-97 is Stephanie Car, Sarah Collins, Lauren Cosentino, Lisa Cosentino, Maria DiLivio, Katherine Dymkowski, Agnes Jankowski, Beth Lawlor, Lori Maloney, Laura Miller, Sarah Prior, Sarah Vinall and Melissa Whaley. The coaches are Frank Lilliman, Mike Campanella, Stu McCarthy, Rob Luciani, George Vinall, Norm Adie, Andy Burns and Jerry Crapsi.

I know all members of the House would want to pay tribute to these young people and their accomplishments.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I know sometimes I allow some leeway on those, particularly when they're non-political statements.

TAXATION

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today and address an issue which is of tremendous importance to the people of my riding of Scarborough Centre. That issue is high taxes.

High taxes, overspending and deficit financing do not create lasting jobs. In fact, they are all barriers to job creation. They are all trademarks of the previous Liberal and NDP governments. I'm glad to say that our government is following through on its pledge to bring real change to Ontario, change that will bring jobs, smaller yet smarter government and less spending.

The plan of the Mike Harris government to revitalize Ontario is working. The 1997 Ontario budget continues the implementation of that plan. The new budget features 20 job-creating tax cuts, along with major reinvestments in several priority areas. The province needs tax relief to stimulate the economy, to be competitive with other jurisdictions and to create new jobs.

Our government is turning the economy around. Ontario is responding with jobs, growth and a renewed confidence and optimism. Focusing on priorities and controlling government spending have also allowed us to reinvest in areas like health care, where we are putting the patient first, education and community safety.

Our plan is working. It lays the foundation for a better tomorrow by investing in the future today. It also allows Ontarians to keep more of their hard-earned dollars.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): What does it say about education in Ontario when a group of parents in Oakville launches a \$150,000 fund-raising drive to buy computers for the two elementary schools their children attend?

To me, it says that we are well on our way to two-tiered education where the children of parents who can afford to raise this kind of money will get the best, while the children of parents who could never raise \$150,000 for anything will have to be satisfied with what the government provides.

With a government that has already cut \$533 million from support for our classrooms, what this government provides to students is less and less; \$533 million dollars in cuts means fewer supplies, fewer programs and larger class sizes. As the quality of education deteriorates, more and more parents who can afford something better for their children will step in to fill the gaps, and more and more schools will become for second-class students. Where does this end? We're well past the point of having a bake sale or a chocolate bar drive to raise a few dollars for a school field trip.

Last year, the government granted charitable foundation to the institutions that have been hardest hit by their cuts. Is this what's ahead for schools? Are they going to turn them into charities and let people get a tax break for contributing to their favourites? This is what education in Ontario is coming to. John Snobelen has created a crisis that can only be resolved by well-to-do parents stepping in, while the kids from less affluent families —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements? Member for Welland-Thorold.

1340

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): People in Pelham, down in Niagara region, very much wanted to believe Mike Harris and his Tory candidates back in 1995 when Mike Harris promised no new taxes and no municipal tax hikes. The people in Pelham know now that they can't believe Mike Harris because, let me tell you, for the tax year of 1997 the average property tax increase for Pelham homeowners is going to be just shy of \$100, and that's before the catastrophic impact of Harris' megadump of spring of this year.

That means that these same hardworking people are going to see taxes increase in 1998 and 1999 by yet hundreds more in addition to the new \$100 tax increase, a direct result of this government's downloading in 1997. These are hardworking people. These are young families with children. These are a whole lot of retirees who simply can't afford higher property taxes.

This government is responsible for the property tax increases and will be held accountable for these property tax increases by people in Pelham as this government will be held accountable across Niagara region, indeed across this province. These people were misled during the campaign of 1995. They won't be deceived again, I can tell you that.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Welland-Thorold, you can't accuse a member of this

House of misleading the public, and although you may suggest you didn't, I think you did and I'm going to ask you to withdraw.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw, but these people won't be misled again.

The Speaker: I appreciate the difficulty for you standing up and using just those two words but it's your choice and I'll give you one last opportunity.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw, Speaker. But these people won't be misled again.

POLICE WEEK

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): I rise to remind members that this is Police Week 1997. It was decided many years ago that Police Week would always be held in May, starting on the Sunday in the week that contains the 15th day and ending on the following Saturday. May 15 is recognized internationally as Peace Officers Memorial Day. Tomorrow we should reflect and pay honour to those who have given the ultimate sacrifice, the loss of their lives in the line of duty.

Police Week has focused on a variety of social and crime-related topics since its inception. Over the last several years, the main purpose of Police Week has been to forge stronger partnerships between police services and the communities they serve and of which they are a part.

Policing today is being given back to the community. By working together everyone benefits. Through the interaction of individuals, organizations and institutions which all share a responsibility for the wellbeing of the community, we are all better protected. As a former police officer and chair of the Waterloo Regional Police Services Board, I am proud to say that this government is strongly committed to front-line policing and is playing a leading role —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): For over six months I have been trying to get Bill 78 discussed in committee. The government has done nothing but stall. Innocent children have lost their lives. Only vehicle liability will give the law teeth to prevent future deaths. Drivers are passing school buses with their hands shielding their faces because they know they can't be charged if they can't be identified.

My bill has the support of the Ontario School Bus Association, Citizens for Responsible Driving, the Canada Safety Council, many school boards and municipalities, to name just a few. Groups supporting my bill want to come before the committee to tell Mr Palladini why vehicle liability is essential to save children's lives.

I have worked closely with Larry and Colleen Marcuzzi on this bill. They have spoken out publicly to explain why vehicle liability is essential. Colleen is looking down from the members' gallery today. Perhaps Mr Palladini would explain to her why he won't pass vehicle liability.

Quit stalling and quit playing politics, Minister. Implement your own vehicle liability legislation or let Bill 78 receive immediate public hearings. By the rules

of this House and democratic government, it is entitled to that. The children of Ontario deserve no less.

ORDER AND DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The mace is a very important part of the heritage of this House and it is the significant instrument with which the Sergeant at Arms exerts his authority within this place. I don't think its access should be blocked for the sergeant by piles of papers or boxes.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On the point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand what the member for Perth is trying to say, but it also has to be pointed out that petitions have a long tradition within the British parliamentary system. In fact, that probably predates the actual utilization of the mace. We understand that we've been given direction for those particular petitions to be there, quite a number of them.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I thank the member for Perth for his submission. I think you make a valid point of order. There needs to be some accommodation, obviously, for members to bring in petitions and occasionally those petitions come from large numbers of people in this province. I have to allow a certain leeway to bring those petitions into this place because that is, in the greatest parliamentary tradition, what we are allowed to do and what we have been allowed to do.

I suggested they put them there and a whole bunch more are behind me in the back that they've agreed to put there. It seemed to me that for the limited amount of space they're going to take up, it made a lot more sense to allow them to be piled there than to be piled on their desks, which I would have classified as a demonstration.

It appears to me that we're getting close to a demonstration stage now by piling them all on everyone's desks. I would ask that you could put one at the front. Whoever wants to carry forward this petition may have one on their desk. That's acceptable, and I'll put the rest up front here. But once you start putting them on every member's desk, I think we're getting close to a demonstration, and I accept to some degree that point of order. Clearly, it's well received by the third party because I can see the member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Speaker, if I may, further to your ruling: There are hundreds and hundreds of thousands of signatures on this anti-Bill 84 petition. I have 4,000 from Niagara Falls. I wanted to refer to them during my comments today. May I keep the 4,000 from Niagara Falls, or at least the 750 from Thorold?

The Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold, I appreciate what you've put on the record now. I'd just like to say to you, if you'd like to keep those there you're more than welcome to take them out of the box and put them on your desk.

Mr Kormos: Thank you.

The Speaker: You're welcome. Statements.

PARENT FINDERS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): A few years ago, under the NDP government, Parent Finders and the

Adoption Council of Ontario received a grant from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to update their services and improve their accessibility. Since that time these two voluntary organizations have published a new search manual, a new facilitators manual and services directory.

This Saturday the two organizations are sponsoring for the first time ever an outreach program called the Adoption Community Outreach Project's Provincial Registration Day, on Saturday, May 17, right across the province. The goal of the event is to provide public awareness around rights and services available to members of the adoption community. Volunteer representatives will be available at over 40 locations such as malls, farmers markets and libraries to provide free information and assistance to those interested in disclosure and reunion.

I would like to say on a personal level that my own experience with those organizations has been very positive. It was through a member of Parent Finders, Holly Kramer, that I was able to locate my birth son. The members are made up of adopted children, birth parents and adoptive parents, and between them they have a wealth of experience, compassion and advice to offer.

In Riverdale volunteers will be at the St Barnabas' Church at 361 Danforth Avenue. If you are interested in finding out where they will be in your area, you can call 416-465-8434.

1350

BUDGET

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): The opposition parties in the Legislature today are floundering. Since the introduction of our budget on May 6 by our Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, the opposition is totally at a loss.

How can they criticize a government which is doing so much for so many, a government which has found significant savings and continues to do so yet also makes needed reinvestments in various areas of our life together in this wonderful province, a government which demonstrates every day that it can both cut taxes and deliver better government services at less cost?

It's plain to me that some opposition members have implied or suggested that this government has cut health care spending. Nothing could be further from the truth. Total spending on health care this year will be \$18.5 billion. Spending on ongoing programs alone will be \$17.5 billion, up from \$17.4 billion, to which we are all firmly committed.

What is truly new in the budget for health care, what has rendered our critics speechless and silenced the federal Liberals who have cut \$2.1 billion in transfer payments to Ontario, is that we are investing both in capital and projects and in the restructuring process itself. We cannot expect hospitals to shoulder the entire burden of restructuring and we recognize that over the next five years there will be \$2.7 billion reinvested in health care in our communities.

We have put the people and the patient first in finding ways to change spending priorities so that Ontario continues to enjoy a state-of-the-art health care system.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TRUCKING SAFETY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. Yesterday I attended the truck safety blitz on Highway 400. I understand today you attended the same. More than half the vehicles yesterday were stopped or detained for a reason. One of your inspectors described one as a rolling Molotov cocktail. Another vehicle was described as a real horror show on wheels.

You have done absolutely nothing on truck safety except hold a few press conferences and blow a lot of hot air that with each passing day seems more and more meaningless. Will you call Bill 125 so that we can debate it and pass it in this House today?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I totally disagree with the honourable member saying that MTO enforcement staff and OPP officers have done absolutely nothing when it comes to truck safety. It's certainly something that needs to be readdressed, and taken a look at by the member.

I want to say to the member that I believe we have done a much greater job than your government ever did when you were in power, with the ingredients we have introduced, with the regulations we have implemented, and when it comes to taking vehicles off the road. I want to congratulate MTO staff and OPP staff for picking out the bad trucks because that's the art, in picking out. It's not the numbers that come out of it. It's making sure we pick the right ones and take those plates off the road. Their dedication — I want to commend them for what they've done towards truck safety.

Mr Duncan: We'd like to commend them as well. In fact, Minister, we've been told by the OPP that they can't access your data, that your ministry and the OPP aren't even communicating. We've been told today that the OPP has invested in computer hardware to enable them to access your ministry's CVOR data — that's the basic data you have on trucks and safety — but your ministry won't give them a password.

Further, we've met with your MTO inspectors, who say there's nothing but confusion coming from the top. Your inspectors don't know who's in charge of this — them or the OPP. The OPP and the inspectors can't agree. The only thing they agree on is that they are getting no support from you, no support from the leadership of your ministry. Will you act today to address their concerns, bring in Bill 125 and then bring in more comprehensive legislation to deal with these extremely important matters?

Hon Mr Palladini: As usual, the honourable member is wrong: I believe that OPP and MTO staff have a good working relationship and they are working in conjunction and making sure that safety on our highways is not compromised. Again I want to say that the member is wrong: The OPP have access through their dispatcher if they want to get a copy of the carrier's CVOR, so I do believe that elements are in place.

I want to say to the member that whatever we have done, I am not satisfied. I believe more has to be done.

I have even asked the honourable member — if you have input that you would like to give me, I'd be very willing to listen to you. We're going to continue to make sure that safety on our highways is not compromised.

Mr Duncan: We do have input. We'll be doing an opposition day in two weeks, and I will be introducing a private member's bill — it's being drafted right now — and will respond. In fact, there are a lot of people who want input.

In the members' gallery today are Robina Campbell's daughters. You'll remember Ms Campbell. She was one of the women killed on December 28. When you came out this morning they wanted to talk to you. Their family has sent you 15 letters and they have called your office repeatedly because they wanted input. They told me that when they spoke with you briefly today you blew them off, that you weren't interested in talking to them.

Will you meet with them today? Will you hear what they have to say? Will you call your bill and will you introduce comprehensive safety legislation, stop the press conference and start acting on a very crucial matter that you've been sitting on for two years?

Hon Mr Palladini: I want to say to the honourable member that he is dead wrong. I did not blow anybody off, and after question period I'd be very pleased to meet the two young ladies you are making reference to and I would like them to tell me if I did blow them off. As a matter of fact, I talked to them. I even told them that as far as what is going to happen with our overall safety bill, wheel separation will be a major part of that bill. I personally gave them that commitment this morning. The allegations you're making are totally wrong.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): My question today is to the Solicitor General. Firefighters, many fire chiefs across this province and many municipal councillors are opposed to your Bill 84, the so-called Fire Protection and Prevention Act. Some 225,000 Ontarians have signed petitions in opposition to this bill, many of which already have been presented in this House, and more are coming today.

We all believe that if you proceed with this bill you will be putting Ontarians' lives in jeopardy. Will you finally listen to the opposition to this bill, to our professional firefighters and the people of this province and withdraw Bill 84?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): The reality is that the government has listened. The justice committee listened to a number of delegations right across this province. There has been significant change to the legislation based on the input received both by the committee and certainly through discussions and deliberations that I participated in both with chiefs' organizations and the firefighters' unions on a number of occasions. We addressed a significant number of the concerns that were brought forward. I can go through those amendments, and I will in a supplementary, but I think there's no question that we've addressed those concerns. Many of the petitions the member is talking

about were signed and tabled prior to the amendments being brought forward, and we have addressed in a very significant way the major concerns of virtually everyone who expressed a concern about the legislation as tabled.

Mr Ramsay: That's wrong. The minor changes you've made have ignored the most dangerous parts of this bill, and the most dangerous parts of this bill are the potential for privatization, replacing full-time firefighters with part-timers and allowing municipalities to underservice their fire stations in using a call-back system. Those dangerous aspects are still in Bill 84.

Ontario's firefighting system is world-renowned. It is also one of the most effective government agencies we have. Any Ontarian at any time of the day can place a call to a fire station, a real person answers and help is instantly on the way. Why do you continue to push through a bill that encourages our municipalities to cut fire safety?

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You can't applaud in the gallery. Thank you.

1400

Hon Mr Runciman: One of the ironies of the press conference that took place this morning was that there was an indication that some municipal officials were not going to support the legislation. The concerns that have been expressed by some firefighters and others with respect to the legislation is the question of privatization. The bill in no way encourages privatization. There's no change from the past. To indicate that's the case is not accurate. To suggest that municipal officials have some concerns — ultimately, if any decision is made in that respect, it would be municipal officials who make it.

We have addressed all the major concerns. We've bent over backwards to accommodate the people expressing concerns about the legislation, have met with them on numerous occasions. We've made every effort possible to address what we believed in the end were legitimate concerns.

I must say that I am disappointed the attitude continues to prevail that this is bad legislation. In fact, this is very good legislation that improves public safety in this province.

Mr Ramsay: If you were seriously against the privatization of fire services in Ontario, you would change the definition of "employer" in the act to take out "a person or organization" and just restrict it to "municipality." But you haven't done that.

American companies are waiting at the Peace Bridge and they're already here in Ontario. They've bought up six emergency services in Ontario and they're waiting to privatize those fire stations. We're very concerned that with the manning of these fire stations with part-time workers, we're not going to have the responsiveness that Ontario firefighters are renowned for.

As you know, a fire doubles in size every minute. It's Ontario's record to have firefighters at the job in three to four to five minutes that saves people's lives in Ontario. This bill is going to destroy that. I ask you again: Withdraw this bill today.

Hon Mr Runciman: I don't believe it's responsible to make those kinds of allegations or accusations that the

member opposite is making. In fact, this bill is going to provide increased fire protection for Ontarians right across this province. We have significant agreement on that. Certainly if you talk to chiefs, if you talk to volunteers across this province, and if you talk to most rank-and-file firefighters when they are made aware of the amendments we've brought forward to this legislation through the committee process —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Sudbury, member for Essex South, member for Kenora, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Essex South, I'm not debating you. Please come to order. I have to hear the answer from the Solicitor General.

Hon Mr Runciman: This bill in many ways, in many respects, strengthens fire protection in this province. One element is the fact that we now have the authority, through the Ontario fire marshal's office — if he or she in the future believes a municipality is not providing an adequate level of public safety through their fire service, he or she has the option and the power to step in and make changes to ensure that that level of protection is provided.

That sort of thing is not in the current legislation. We're talking about legislation that is half a century old. We've moved it into the next century, the century coming.

New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is to the Solicitor General as well. There are about a quarter of a million people across this province who don't believe a word you say. They've read your legislation. They understand that it's about privatizing fire services, they understand that it's about taking full-time fire services and making them into part-time fire services, and they understand it's about reduced fire services.

These are petitions signed by a quarter-million people across this province, people from Hamilton, Thunder Bay, Scarborough, North York, Brockville, Sault Ste Marie, Elliot Lake, Niagara Falls, Chatham, Nepean, Richmond Hill, Sarnia, you name it, from all across this province. They represent a tidal wave of opposition against your legislation.

They've read it, they've listened to people, they know what's in it. They know this involves the downgrading of fire services and this involves the downgrading of public safety in this province. Minister, why won't you listen to the quarter-million people who know you're wrong and have the courage to come out and petition you and tell you you're wrong?

Hon Mr Runciman: I guess there's a political justification for raising this issue today. I'm not sure there's any other justification, certainly not a public safety justification.

I recognize the importance of petitions and concerns being expressed by Ontarians relative to any piece of legislation this government may bring forward, but I pointed out in an earlier question that those petitions, to my knowledge, were all signed prior to the amendments coming forward through clause-by-clause in legislation.

The justice committee carried out extensive consultations across this province in a number of municipalities. My office and myself personally met with officials, both the chiefs and other stakeholders, including the unions, on numerous occasions to address their concerns. We put forward very substantive amendments recognizing those concerns and legitimate suggestions and ways we could improve the legislation, including amendments proposed by members of the opposition parties. To suggest that those —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Mr Hampton: What this answer amounts to is that a quarter of a million people don't know anything, that 9,000 firefighters don't know anything, that volunteer firefighters, who agree that this legislation is not anything like what you say it is, don't know anything either, according to you. According to you, even your former parliamentary assistant doesn't know anything, because he saw how flawed this legislation was so you had to replace him.

What it comes down to is this: Fire chiefs, such as Dave Field from Windsor, say that this legislation is going to do harm. Peter Ferguson, fire chief here in Toronto, said this is going to do harm and he's urged you to withdraw this legislation. Insurance agents, fire survivors, seniors, police, doctors, nurses across this province have come forward and said that what you're really doing is that in order to take money out of fire services, you're prepared to downgrade the whole system.

What does it take to get you to listen to people who honestly care about the quality of fire protection and public safety? What does it take?

Hon Mr Runciman: I think we have listened and we've consulted and have made a very extensive effort to listen to concerns and to try to address them through the amendments and through the committee hearing process.

I must say I regret that at this stage of the game there are still those who are not supportive of the legislation, contrary to indications that were given to me when the amendments were finalized. That's unfortunate. Certainly we want to have the support of everyone involved in providing fire protection across this province, and we've tried to achieve that. Hopefully, upon finalization and completion of passage of this bill, we can work with all the stakeholders to ensure that's the case in the future.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Solicitor General, you haven't listened to the concerned citizens, hundreds of thousands of them, 9,000 thousand professional firefighters, thousands of volunteer firefighters who are partners in blended services. You haven't responded to their concerns.

You know that Bill 84 is going to put public safety at risk. It opens the door and facilitates the introduction of part-time firefighters and, more dramatically, of privatized firefighting services, American corporate for-profit style, and we know from the US experience that those private corporate firefighting services put profits before public safety.

This isn't just about dollars and cents. You're talking about people's lives and public safety. We know that

speed, experience and teamwork save lives. You don't get a second chance when you're fighting a fire. How many people are going to have to die in fires in this province before you'll listen and make the meaningful and appropriate changes to Bill 84?

Hon Mr Runciman: That kind of rhetoric is offensive, to say the least. This is the same party that brought in employment equity in the fire services.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Runciman: I just want to briefly go over some of the concerns we've recognized during this process. Management exclusions: We're now red-circling to protect individuals who do not want to go into the management. Hours of work, a very major concern of firefighters when we talked to them across this province: We're going back to the original act. Emergency recall: We're going to allow that to be part of the collective bargaining process. Existing collective agreements will remain in place during a transition period to protect firefighters.

We've added definitions of "lockout" and "strike" as used under the Labour Relations Act, as asked for by the unions. We removed the certification and decertification provisions to allow fire associations to continue to represent firefighters. We've added the definition of "collective agreement." We've ensured that OMERS pensions are not affected by this legislation. We've clarified with respect to conciliation. We've deemed the existing associations to be the sole bargaining agents for the firefighters.

We have gone that extra mile to recognize those concerns and I'm very proud of this piece of legislation.

The Speaker: New question, third party.

Mr Hampton: I say to the Solicitor General that there aren't many people here today who agree with you.

1410

PUBLIC SERVICE AND LABOUR RELATIONS REFORM

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. About a month ago you amputated the regulations section from Bill 103 so you wouldn't have to have Cafon Court public hearings on your megacity scheme and you told reporters that there would be a son of megacity bill to follow. You said it would deal with "how you deal with labour relations issues; for example, how do you amalgamate the various union contracts and that kind of stuff." We understand that legislation is being drafted now. We understand you're going to give the Association of Municipalities of Ontario the hammer to now go after their employees.

Take firefighters, for example. Will you confirm today that firefighters, police and other public sector employees will no longer have access to the roster —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Hampton: — of respected independent arbitrators on labour contracts, that in fact your government is going to appoint these people on a patronage basis?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): What happens with labour contracts when the new city is formed after January 1, 1998, will be the responsibility of the new council. The new council will have all the authority to negotiate with its various bargaining units, various unions, to determine not only what is in the best interests of the municipality, but in the best interests of the employees as well. What we're doing at the present time is drafting legislation that will enable the new council to take whatever actions it deems appropriate to deal with labour relations matters.

Mr Hampton: The legislation you're drafting deals with virtually every city, town and municipality in this province. It's legislation that will allow your government to go after those bargaining units. You didn't say a word of that in Bill 84. You didn't say a word of that in any of your other downloading legislation. But now it's coming out.

We understand the new dispute resolution commission will have all its members chosen by the Premier's office for order-in-council appointments. They will be given powers of binding arbitration over all workers in the broader public sector. The municipal employers, through AMO, have been given every opportunity to influence the drafting of this legislation. It amounts to a secret appendix to the agreement you drafted with AMO, something like hush money.

My question is this, Minister: Don't you think it's unfair that the only people you've talked to in the drafting of this legislation —

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Hampton: — are the employers? Don't you think you should have talked to the workers, the firefighters and their unions before you drafted this legislation?

Hon Mr Leach: Obviously, as the member opposite knows, when the legislation is introduced it will go to committee where everybody will have an opportunity to have input.

I can tell the member opposite that the municipalities have consulted with their labour forces. What we want to ensure is that the duly elected council of the new city, for example, has every right and every means to deal fairly with its employees, and that the employees have every right to negotiate in a fair and reasonable way with their employer.

Mr Hampton: The minister doesn't understand why people would be upset when this legislation is drafted in the back room, and then is brought out and workers across the province who work in the broader public sector, who provide fire services, police services and other public services are told, "Here it is." You don't understand why people would be upset about that? Let me tell you why they'd be upset about that.

These changes are going to affect people's lives. We suspect it's not going to be done in a fair way at all, the same as Bill 84 was drafted and then hatched as a surprise on firefighters. This is going to be another nasty surprise by your government. If you're going to get rid of independent arbitrators, and you're giving all the power over public sector workers to a board of Conservative patronage hacks who are going to do your bidding through their concept of binding arbitration, there's no

wonder that firefighters are here today and no wonder that all kinds of public sector workers are worried and concerned.

Minister, don't you think you should at least talk to them before you draft this legislation —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: What I have faith in is the ability of the employer and the ability of the union to be able to negotiate a contract —

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Why don't you sit down with the union?

Hon Mr Leach: Because it's the responsibility of their employer to do that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, I warn you to come to order.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): You talk to the —

The Speaker: Member for Sudbury East.

Interruption.

The Speaker: Order in the galleries. Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: It's rather disappointing that the head of the labour party would not have faith in the unions to be able to sit down and negotiate a contract with their employer. That's what we're doing with our legislation, to ensure that both labour and management have the tools they need to be able to negotiate a contract and to resolve any disputes they may have, whether that's by arbitration or by any other means. But it should be between the unions and the employers to work that out.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Attorney General. Ontario was quite surprised to learn in the past day that Premier Harris is considering fingerprinting all Ontario residents. For many in Ontario this is a very chilling thought. It smacks of a totalitarian government, the state watching our every move. I think it's unacceptable to the people of Ontario. It is the ultimate bully tactic. Will you tell the people of Ontario today that the government has no intention of pursuing this dangerous intrusion into private lives?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I will refer this question to the Chair of Management Board.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): This matter is being actively debated at the Metropolitan Toronto council, which is apparently concerned about abuse in the welfare system, about fraud and overpayment in the welfare system. I understand the item will go to Metro council on June 4, I believe it is. I can only say on behalf of the province of Ontario, and I would hope this view would be shared by all members of the House, that this government is concerned about fraud, about overpayments, about moneys that are not being used effectively and efficiently in whatever system, whether it's the health care system, the welfare system, the WCB.

This government feels that any method to ensure taxpayers' dollars are used most effectively to the people

who need the services should be explored and investigated.

1420

Mr Phillips: The reason we asked the question of the Attorney General is, this is not about tidiness and neatness and money; it's about fundamental rights for people of Ontario. That's why we went to the Attorney General, and to refer it, as if this were simply another little budget matter, is irresponsible.

We're talking about Mike Harris here, not Metro council. Mike Harris: "Harris mulls idea of fingerprint ID for all Ontarians."

Attorney General, I'll return to you for this question. This is a fundamental issue for the people of Ontario. I don't mean to be overly dramatic —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Quinte, that's out of order. I would ask that you withdraw that.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I withdraw it.

Mr Phillips: Wars, Attorney General, have literally been fought over this. This is a matter of fundamental rights, and I return to you. Will you, on behalf of Mike Harris and the government, rule out this draconian, major invasion of fundamental privacy of people?

Hon David Johnson: The Provincial Auditor has indicated that in the family benefits program there's some \$100 million in fraud.

Interjections.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): This has nothing to do with fraud.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East and Essex South, I warn you to come to order. I won't warn you again. Minister.

Hon David Johnson: I think there are a number of issues that need to be respected in this. Certainly there are privacy issues that need to be respected, no question about it. There is also a need of the people of Ontario to have access to the best possible services — health services, social services, workers' compensation — that they can get from the government given the amount of money that's available to provide those services.

This government feels that, in light of those criteria, every possibility should be explored to ensure that, yes, privacy is respected, to ensure that systems are affordable and to ensure that the people of Ontario get the best possible services for the taxes that they pay.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Attorney General: Is your government saying that there is a problem that is so pressing, so urgent that you have to muse out loud about interfering with the democratic rights, the civil liberties of all 11 million people in Ontario? You have an obligation under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to ensure that the charter is fulfilled and respected, to ensure that people's civil liberties and democratic rights are respected. Are you honestly saying as a government that there is such an urgent and pressing problem that you have to muse out loud about interfering with the civil liberties and the democratic rights of 11 million people by means of fingerprinting them all?

Hon Mr Harnick: I don't believe that anyone for an instant is saying or musing out loud that we don't have to respect the charter, that we don't have to respect —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I can't hear the response. The question was allowed to be put. I think it's a responsible House that allows the answer to be put.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Mike will check Hansard.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, I ask that the answer be allowed to be put. Attorney General.

Hon Mr Harnick: I don't think anyone for one instant is suggesting that the charter doesn't have to be respected or that we don't have privacy laws against which legislation must be judged. That is taking liberties with what is happening at Metro council, a council that, I might add, has been considering this issue for six years, that is looking at the issue in terms of controlling a process they are concerned with, but that is also trying to do it in a way that's balanced and fair. No one for an instant is suggesting —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Harnick: — and to make that categorization is absolutely false. To try and impute that kind of motive and to assume that laws don't have to be obeyed or that we wouldn't be respecting the charter as we watch what Metro council is doing is purely ludicrous.

Mr Hampton: Let's get right down to it. I'll tell you, Mr Attorney General, videotapes and audiotapes don't lie. They heard the Premier musing out loud about the benefits of having 11 million people in this province fingerprinted. You may not remember this, but in that very anti-democratic state of South Africa they used to have pass cards. If you wanted to go somewhere, you had to have a pass card. It is complete interference with people's civil liberties.

But let's take it even a step further. Let's get down to the real problem. The problem you have is this: Your government, despite all of its bragging, is not producing any jobs, so 1.5 million people in this province who are unemployed are becoming more desperate. You can kick people on social assistance all you want and then you can fingerprint them, but that isn't going to make their life in Mike Harris's economy any less desperate. Why don't you deal with the real problem? Instead of talking about fingerprinting 11 million people, why don't you get down to creating some jobs —

The Speaker: Thank you. Answer.

Hon Mr Harnick: If there was anyone who created desperation in this province, it was the former government who, after five years, lost 10,000 net jobs in the province. The fact of the matter is that in the last two months alone we have created, I think in the month of March, 46,000 net new jobs. If you want to talk about people creating desperation, it was the former government who put people in desperate straits.

We, as a government, are putting people back to work. We're creating new investment. We're bringing investment to Ontario. We're creating a climate that makes Ontario competitive again and is creating new jobs. Quite simply, we want to put people back to work to undo the damage they did as a government.

STUDENT OPPORTUNITY TRUST FUND

1430

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. Even though this government has improved the economic climate such that thousands of jobs are being created in Ontario on a monthly basis, the reality is that many people in the province still have difficulty affording a post-secondary education.

In last year's budget the government established the Ontario student opportunity trust fund, setting a goal of \$100 million, which the province pledged to match dollar for dollar to support post-secondary education. I understand there has been considerable interest in the trust fund, that both colleges and universities have supported the government's initiative. How successful has the student opportunity trust fund been?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I note from the press today, perhaps it's Dr Stockwell and Mr Speaker, but I'll leave that to your observation.

The Speaker: It is Mr Speaker, and maybe the evil one, I don't know, but you're pushing to find out. I'm not sure.

Hon Mr Snobelen: It seems like the good Speaker, Mr Speaker, today.

I want to thank the member for Niagara Falls for the question. It's a question that we have been asked on several occasions around the province. In fact last year when we announced the Ontario student opportunity trust fund, we set a goal of \$100 million for this fund that would be matched by the Ontario government and that would allow assistance for those students who are in most financial need. I have to say that I believe the university and college community was overwhelmed with the support from the private sector, individuals right across this province, who contributed \$250 million, matched by the provincial government, a \$500-million fund which will help 166,000 students in need over the next decade.

I think this speaks volumes about the support of individuals in Ontario to programs that make sense and speaks very well for the Challenge fund, which will help the research in our universities over the course of the next decade as well.

Mr Maves: Minister, it's heartening to hear that news. In light of the success of the fund to date, will the minister extend the program?

Hon Mr Snobelen: In fact we have, as I was just saying, announced the Challenge fund, a 10-year program, \$3 billion, in cooperation with the federal government, with the private sector, with individuals, with universities and the provincial government to create research centres of excellence in Ontario.

In addition to that, because colleges were restricted by previous governments from getting help from individuals in the private sector, and they only recently have got permission from this government to go out and have that kind of support, we are going to extend the student opportunity trust fund for our colleges so they can take advantage for another full year. I am very proud of the support our colleges and universities have got from individuals in the private sector right across Ontario.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My question today is for the Minister of Health. Two days ago Women's College Hospital presented a report concerning the final submission to what many Ontarians now know as the health services destruction commission. The report found that your commission has overestimated the kinds of savings it can deliver not by a few dollars, not even by \$10 million, but by \$51 million, and then underestimated the one-time cost by \$31 million. That's an \$89-million error. Today we heard from representatives from the Montfort Hospital, from Riverside, from Ottawa General, a hospital not even closing, and they have presented an analysis confirmed by Deloitte and Touche and by KPMG in which they say \$89 million worth of savings and costs are wrong.

Who is going to protect the public interest here? Who is going to make sure, when these multimillion-dollar errors happen, that the public is going to be protected? Will it be you, and will you stand and tell us how you'll do that today?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member is very much aware of the process that's set out in law, that the hospitals have every right to do what they are doing: to present their own data, new data, revised data, including cost projections or cost-saving projections, to the Health Services Restructuring Commission. I trust in the case of Women's College they've done that. I know in the case of Montfort and the hospitals involved in the press conference today that during their press conference they said they had submitted those data to the commission. The commission will make the final determination.

Mr Kennedy: I think the people of Ontario, the patients served by those hospitals you're proposing to close — you're proposing to close these hospitals just as you've cut all the hospitals in this province — want to know who is looking after the interests of patients. You keep claiming you can't do anything, that you've put this hospital destruction commission out there to do things, that there is a process. I want to send over to you part of your own Bill 26. It says, "The minister may amend or revoke a direction made under this section where the minister considers it to be in the public interest...."

Minister, \$171 million worth of errors by your commission have been identified in the past two days. Who is going to protect Ontarians when your commission makes mistakes? Will you use the powers you have and will you protect the interests of people who need good health care in this province?

Hon Mr Wilson: I could read back to the honourable member all the quotes from his leader, from past health critics on that side calling for restructuring in this province and the need to get rid of the waste, duplication and inefficiencies of the system and invest every dollar found in savings back into front-line services for patients, more services for patients as we prepare for our growing and aging population.

I'll say to the honourable member and repeat my last answer: The commission will make the final determina-

tion. I have heard Dr Duncan Sinclair, the head of that commission, through the media, on TV and the radio, saying many, many times that he welcomes this sort of input, that they want to get it right. It's premature to say it's a "mistake" at this point, given that what this process is about is to present up-to-date data to make sure the commission receives all the facts it needs to make a final determination.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Ma question est au ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, et je demande qu'il réponde à la question. Vous savez que présentement vous avez une loi, votre gouvernement, le projet de loi 108, qui traite des poursuites concernant certaines infractions provinciales devant la Chambre. Moi, je vous dis que ce que vous êtes en train de faire, c'est de mettre en danger les services en français pour beaucoup de francophones en l'Ontario.

Tout, si cette loi passe, quoi qu'il va arriver, quoi qu'il se passe avec les infractions provinciales, jusqu'à aller aux tribunaux, ne va pas être couvert sous la Loi 8. Je vais vous lire une décision que j'ai eue des avocats de cette Assemblée. Je vais la lire en anglais car la réponse est en anglais. Je veux que vous écoutiez. Ça dit:

"Bill 108 will not preserve the right to receive court administration and support services, ie, services provided outside the courtroom, when those services are provided by municipalities —"

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Bisson: Speaker, please, this is serious. "This is because the French Language Services Act does not apply to municipalities and because the courts of justice —"

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, come to order, please. Minister.

L'hon Noble A. Villeneuve (ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones) : Nous avons répondu à la question. Mon collègue le ministre de la Justice a répondu à votre question il y a déjà deux jours. Nous avons écouté très attentivement les juristes d'expression française qui ont fait leur présentation au comité, et puis je peux vous assurer que le projet de loi 108 n'enlèvera rien à nos Ontariens d'expression française.

Mr Bisson: Monsieur le Ministre, la décision est bien claire. Les avocats de cette Assemblée nous disent, «Oui les francophones vont perdre les services en français pour tous les services hors de la cour.» Justement, quand j'ai fait cette enquête-là ils me disent, puis je le dis encore, dans le document que j'ai encore — c'est écrit en anglais, "The Office of Francophone Affairs is hoping that Bill 108 will be amended."

C'est vous, le ministre de ce secrétariat. Allez-vous supporter notre amendement pour amender le projet de loi 108 pour garantir que les services en français vont être respectés par les municipalités quand vous donnerez ces services-là aux municipalités ?

L'hon M. Villeneuve : Comme je vous ai dit, nous avons écouté toutes les représentations qui ont été faites

au comité et je vous assure que le ministre de la Justice ainsi que moi-même n'enlèverons rien à nos Ontariens d'expression française.

ENVIRONMENTAL APPROVALS

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): My question is for the minister of Environment and Energy. In Kent county and indeed all of southwestern Ontario concern for the environment is primary. In Essex county because of the proximity to the United States, in Lambton because of the Chemical Valley, I understand today that you introduced a pilot program that encourages development and use of new environmental technologies. Could you explain for the House exactly what that new pilot project is?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I believe this is an important new effort on behalf of the Ministry of Environment and Energy to encourage new innovation and new technologies. What will happen is that the Ministry of Environment and Energy will provide written evaluations on new technologies. This will give potential buyers and investors greater confidence in this new technology. It will speed up approvals in Ontario and it will help hurdle many of the barriers which new innovators have in the marketplace.

This new project will ensure that new innovators in Ontario with regard to the environment will not only have an opportunity in the domestic market but will also have an opportunity in the international market.

Mr Carroll: It sounds as though the project, the pilot you announced today, takes into account the required balance between industry and the environment. Could you explain for us — obviously there's a process involved — exactly what that process does involve?

Hon Mr Sterling: At the present time, if a person comes up with a new technology to solve an environmental problem, it is necessary for them to go out and sell this technology to a would-be buyer. It is often necessary for them to have the order for that project to go ahead, that is, they have to combine the new technology with the site and then get approval from the Ministry of Environment.

Under this process, the inventor or the innovator or the entrepreneur can come to the ministry before they actually have the order and the site location. They therefore can get pre-approval or pre-evaluation of their innovative technology and take that approval and use it as a sales tool to help them sell this new technology to a would-be buyer.

This is not a required thing that they do for the environment but it is an option. It is a tool which the environmental industry can use to their benefit, not only in our province —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. New question.

1440

HAMILTON HARBOUR

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Environment. First of all, Minister, if you want to help the environment, maybe you can restore some of the \$121 million that you've cut out since you have taken office.

In regard to the question: The west side of Hamilton Harbour has an area known as Randle Reef. It is one of the most contaminated hot spots in Canada. It is probably the second-worst spot. It is the worst spot in Hamilton Harbour. It is coal tar, a contamination that is causing a threat to the rest of Hamilton Harbour. It is spreading and it is in desperate need of cleanup.

The cost of this cleanup is estimated to be about \$8.5 million. One third of that money has been committed by the federal government. There's an effort to get Stelco, the company responsible for part of it, to commit to one third. Can I ask you today if the provincial government is willing to do its share in the cleanup of Randle Reef in Hamilton Harbour and commit to one third of the \$8.5 million necessary?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): About a month ago I announced that this government was going to give, and we did transfer, \$1 million to clean up the Randle Reef problem, which has been brought to the attention of the House by the member opposite. We feel that contribution is a first step. The federal government has given forward \$3.5 million.

We have to take this into context with the other things that the provincial ministry has been doing with regard to the cleanup of a number of projects in the Great Lakes. This government and previous governments have contributed about \$300 million to that process, while the federal government has committed about \$80 million. We feel that imbalance has to be made up and perhaps in this particular project there's a greater onus on the federal government to come forward with a little bit more money than the provincial government does in this case.

Mr Agostino: Simply, that is not good enough, Minister. That is not good enough for the people of Hamilton. That excuse is flawed. You have a responsibility to do your share to help clean up Hamilton Harbour. The federal government has committed money. Past history and histrionics mean nothing to this project. What is holding up this project is your lack of commitment towards the cleanup of this spot in Hamilton Harbour.

One million dollars is not enough. It is a one third cost-sharing. The price has gone down from \$15 million to \$8.5 million now as the result of technology, so your commitment for that project to go ahead must be \$3.5 million. Anything short of that shows a lack of commitment and a lack of leadership. You sitting here passing the buck to the federal government simply is not good enough.

The work and the money that you talked about earlier that has gone into the cleanup of Hamilton Harbour is now in jeopardy as a result of the fact that this hot spot — we're not talking about a feel-good thing here. We're talking about a toxic hot spot. We're talking about cancer-causing chemicals and agents in this. Again, I ask you, Minister, will you show leadership today and commit to —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Hon Mr Sterling: I believe a number of people are responsible for the cleanup. We've already mentioned the federal government, the provincial government. We also believe that the industries which created this particular problem should be coming to the table as well.

I indicated previously to the member that the government may consider granting more money to this particular project, but I must say that the mayor, the regional chair and the conservation authority were very pleased with this government, in a tight fiscal situation, being able to give to the community of Hamilton-Wentworth \$1 million for this project last fiscal year. We are looking to continue working with them, but we are looking for other partners to come to the table, as I mentioned before, particularly those who caused this problem.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is for the Attorney General. You know this question is coming, Minister, as I raised it with you earlier and laid some documents before you. I am today in this House publicly raising the plight of Mrs Phyllis McEvoy, whose son, Mark McEvoy, died February 13, 1991, as a result of a shotgun blast at the home of a friend where only he and the friend were present. There were ultimately charges of criminal negligence laid against the friend, but that was reduced by plea bargaining that ultimately resulted in a suspended sentence with two years' probation.

Mrs McEvoy would not accept the fact that this result meant that the justice system decided her son had committed suicide. She could not accept that. With the help of Spectator reporter Jim Holt and regional police services board chair Terry Cooke, she spent two years fighting to get a coroner's inquest that ultimately was held and did show that there was not a suicide. Someone else caused the death, and the death scene had been altered before the police arrived. Minister, this citizen is not only lost in the justice system, she's out \$50,000. I am asking you to review this outstanding legal bill.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Just before you start, Attorney General, can I ask that the private conversations taking place right now be taken out into the east lobby. I am having difficulty hearing the questions. Thank you, Attorney General.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The member did provide me with some material today, and I can assure the member that the material will be reviewed and certainly the question that he has asked will be considered.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the Attorney General's commitment and in a very non-partisan way I know that he will review this as carefully as possible.

I want to underline and underscore to him the fact that Mrs McEvoy is not a rich person by any stretch. She's an ordinary working person who fought to show that the justice system made a mistake and it's proven that they did. In fact, CBC's *The 5th Estate* in October 1996 did a major exposé on how the justice system failed Mrs McEvoy.

I suggest that she is entitled to this \$50,000 that she is now in debt for, for two important reasons: One is that she personally had to fight our justice system to get natural justice for her and her son; second, the coroner's inquest brought out recommendations that have made the justice system better for all citizens of Ontario in the hope

that there won't be any more tragedies like Mrs McEvoy's. I say to you, Attorney General, that there's every reason for this government to take this woman out of debt and give her back as much dignity and hope for the future as this tragedy might allow.

Hon Mr Harnick: Again, I've indicated that I will review the material that the member provided me with and will give it every consideration.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

Mr John L. Parker (York East): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. As you are aware, Minister, this government is all about doing better for less, providing better services at lower cost to the taxpayer. One of the mechanisms for achieving that goal, as I know the opposition wants to hear, is through industry self-management of regulatory compliance. You have carried out some discussions on this matter with some industry groups. I wonder if you can update us on the status of these discussions.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I thank the member for his question. I was fortunate this morning to be addressing the Toronto Real Estate Board and we had a discussion on some of the self-management issues.

First, I'd like to clarify that we're talking about self-management, not self-regulation. The province will continue to set the policy and certainly provide the guidelines. We're talking about licensing functions and enforcement and educational programs as well.

I am happy to report the fact that the Real Estate Council of Ontario, RECO, and the technical standards and safety authority assumed responsibility for the appropriate statutes on May 5. An administrative agreement has been signed with the travel industry, TICO, paving the way for the delegation of functions in the near future.

Clearly these are initiatives that are welcomed by the industries, but certainly welcomed by consumers as well, and I think this will raise the bar in terms of the standards we were going to provide for the consumer in the province of Ontario.

Certainly we now have associations that will encompass all members of these industries and not just the ones which currently belong to private organizations.

1450

Mr Parker: I agree. It's very important for the opposition to keep very clearly in mind that we are talking about self-management of compliance. The regulations will continue to be set by the province.

Minister, you've commented on your discussions with industry groups. Have you also been discussing these matters with consumer groups such as the Canadian Automobile Association or other consumer councils?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: A significant amount of consultation went on with consumer groups. I'm also pleased to advise that a number of the representatives of consumer groups are members of these particular councils. For example, on OMVIC, which is the Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council, we have Pauline Mitchell of Hamilton. Ms Mitchell is a long-time resident of Hamilton but currently is the manager of public and governmental

affairs for the Canadian Automobile Association of south-central Ontario. In the Real Estate Council of Ontario, we have Alan Silverstein, who people recognize as quite an expert in the real estate field and who has a column in the Toronto Star and reports on consumer issues.

Dealing with the technical standards and safety authority, we have Joyce Feinberg, a previous deputy minister with the government who is also a board member of the Canadian Consumer Council, and Rosalie Daly Todd, who's the legal counsel of the Consumers' Association of Canada.

Clearly this is a commitment we have to ensure that the consumers are protected.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. In introducing your Bill 96, the so-called Tenant Protection Act — not — which of course takes away much of the protection from tenants, you received a letter from the chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission expressing some grave concerns — another human rights issue, the second today, that we asked this government about.

Minister, what do you plan to do? For the first time, what this suggests is that you will introduce regulations that are not in the code, undercut the Human Rights Code and allow violations against people by introducing an income test for people, which is discriminatory, systemic discrimination, in fact.

Will you listen to what the commissioner is saying and take sections 36 and 200 out of your particular amendment so human rights will prevail in Ontario?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I've corresponded with the chief commissioner and he has also commented that he does recognize that landlords have legitimate business reasons for requesting information such as credit checks and rental histories. He further stated that the commission does not challenge the landlords who request information concerning a person's rental history and credit ratings or who require first or last month's rent.

The commissioner indicated that he had some difficulty with income information, and we advised the commissioner that we would be pleased to review that with him, and when the bill gets through second reading and gets to committee, we would be pleased to talk about an amendment to deal with that issue.

PETITIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and failure to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of the province of Ontario."

That's signed by many constituents throughout my riding and I attach my name to that as well.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a petition that has been signed by 360 concerned citizens from the community of Fort Frances. What it says is as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

As I indicated, this has been signed by 360 citizens from the community of Fort Frances, and I affix my signature as well in support of them.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

SÉCURITÉ LORS D'UN INCENDIE

FIRE SAFETY

M. Gilles E. Morin (Carleton-Est) : «À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario:

«Les pompiers doivent faire preuve de rapidité, d'expérience et d'esprit d'équipe pour sauver des vies. Je m'oppose à toute législation qui pourrait amoindrir le travail de mes pompiers locaux et compromettre la sécurité lors d'un incendie dans ma communauté. Veuillez écouter ce que disent les pompiers professionnels et amendez ce projet de loi 84 afin d'éliminer la menace à la sécurité lors des incendies.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have here in my hand literally thousands of signatures from people, concerned citizens, about Bill 84, the so-called fire safety

bill, who are very concerned about this bill, and these people are all from the Toronto area. It reads:

"Speed, experience and teamwork save lives. Don't get burned by Bill 84.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I agree with this petition wholeheartedly and will affix my name.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): First, I'd like to thank the member for Algoma for delivering my petitions to me from my riding. Thank you very much. These are from Owen Sound and around Grey county.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition which concerns the current child care crisis in Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Tory government has decided to replace our current child care system with one that lacks compassion and common sense and is fraught with many dangerous consequences; and

"Whereas the concept of affordable, accessible and quality child care is a basic, important, fundamental right for many members of our community who are either unemployed and enrolled into a training program or are working single parents or where both parents are working; and

"Whereas, if our present provincial government is sincere in getting people back to work, they should recognize the value of the child care component of the Jobs Ontario program and acknowledge the validity of the wage subsidy to the child care workers;

"We, the undersigned residents, business owners and child care workers of our Parkdale and High Park communities urge the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario to immediately suspend their plans to implement cuts to our present child care programs across our province, and restore funding to their previous levels."

FIRE SAFETY

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Speed, experience and teamwork save lives. Don't get burned by Bill 84.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

This is signed by hundreds of people from the municipality of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and other places in Niagara region, people like —

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): No, we don't need all the names.

Mr Kormos: I affix my signature to it as I'm in complete agreement with it, along with the thousands of other petitions having been tabled with the Clerk here today.

1500

Mr Maves: I have a number of petitions from people concerned with Bill 84. As the minister has said, all of these came in before the amendments, and I think many of those amendments have addressed some concerns.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): My petition reads: "Speed, experience and teamwork save lives. Don't get burned by Bill 84.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I affix my signature in agreement with hundreds who have signed this petition.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I would just say that it doesn't bode well for the workers of this province when the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour insults firefighters the way the member for Niagara Falls did here just a few moments ago.

I have a petition — in fact I have thousands of petitions signed by over 15,000 concerned citizens in the Hamilton-Wentworth area, my home town — and this petition is in support of those firefighters who are here today, and good for them, putting up the good fight.

"Speed, experience and teamwork save lives. Don't get burned by Bill 84.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I proudly add my name to the 15,000 citizens who are supportive of this petition today.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's signed by some 50 members and attendants of the Knox Presbyterian Church in Elora, and they are opposed to the creation of 44 so-called charity casinos equipped with some 20,000 video lottery terminals.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I've also signed my name to that petition.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I too have a petition, that was signed by 5,550 residents of the regional municipality of Sudbury. These are people who know that the government amendments on Bill 84 were pathetic and do nothing to stop the privatization of fire services or protect —

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would you present the petition? This is not debate.

Ms Martel: Absolutely, Mr Speaker. It reads as follows:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I agree with the petitioners and I have signed my name to these petitions.

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we, the principals and vice-principals of Grey county's elementary and secondary schools, believe that the membership of principals and vice-principals in their respective professional federations is an important factor in creating and maintaining a positive, collegial learning environment for students.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That principals and vice-principals remain as members of the Ontario Teachers' Federation and its affiliates."

FIRE SAFETY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition signed by thousands of people from Thunder Bay, along the North Shore communities and Longlac, Geraldton, Beardmore and Nipigon who are very concerned about Bill 84 and very concerned that the government has not listened. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of our local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in our communities. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I'm proud to sign this on behalf of all the people who are concerned about this issue.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'm pleased today to be submitting petitions from the communities of the city of Scarborough, 16,905 signatures, and from the borough of East York, 1,275. It reads as follows:

"Speed, experience and teamwork save lives. Don't get burned by Bill 84.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I am in complete agreement and have affixed my signature.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Having been the first member of the Legislative Assembly to present a petition in opposition to Bill 84 the day it was tabled, I continue to be expressly concerned about the dangers inherent in this legislation, so I continue to agree that:

“Speed, experience and teamwork save lives. Don’t get burned by Bill 84.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen” to the hundreds and thousands of people, “to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety.”

I affix my signature to it.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I too have a petition that talks about speed, experience and teamwork saving lives.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety.”

I, together with thousands of Kingstonians, have signed a petition like this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): My apologies to the member for Algoma. I was blocked out and I didn’t see you. I recognize you now.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition, but with your indulgence, Speaker, I would like to announce to the members of the assembly that Canada has just defeated Sweden 2 to 1 and won the World Hockey Championship.

The Acting Speaker: I thought you had a petition.

TELEPHONE SERVICES

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition signed by 65 residents of Malette Bay, a community in Ley township, north of Sault Ste Marie.

“Whereas we the residents or property owners in Ley township in the region of Algoma are without telephone service in our community;

“Whereas for several years we have attempted to rectify this situation through individual pleas and by group petitions directly to Bell Canada and at least on one occasion a petition to the CRTC;

“Whereas the situation is this: Bell Canada lines run to within one kilometre of some of the undersigned properties to a maximum of 10 kilometres to the furthest household. These telephone lines are carried on existing utility poles. Utility lines extend past the furthest household;

“Whereas the lack of telephone services endangers all of us due to the inability to contact emergency services such as fire services; the makeup of our community is diverse and includes senior citizens, home-based entrepreneurs and on-call professionals; the nature of our lifestyle

requires the use of inherently dangerous equipment such as chainsaws and axes; both residents and visitors regularly operate potentially dangerous recreational vehicles; lack of speed of access to emergency services such as ambulance heightens our risk significantly;

“Whereas the lack of telephone service seriously impairs the ability of home-based businesses to conduct their business activities in a professional and timely manner;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to intercede on our behalf in our support to have telephone service provided to our community.”

I support this. I can’t believe that in the 1990s a community less than 25 miles from a major urban centre does not have telephone service.

1510

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): On behalf of the member for Nickel Belt, I beg leave to present the 38th report of the standing committee on government agencies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Kormos: No, thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 106, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FIRE PROTECTION AND
PREVENTION ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA PRÉVENTION
ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L’INCENDIE

Mr Runciman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to promote Fire Prevention and Public Safety in Ontario and to amend and repeal certain other Acts relating to Fire Services / Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à promouvoir la prévention des incendies et la sécurité publique en Ontario et modifiant ou abrogeant certaines autres lois relatives aux services de lutte contre les incendies.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I want to indicate at the outset that there has been an all-party agreement for a five-minute bell on this bill at five to 6.

I’m pleased to have the opportunity to make a few brief remarks at third reading of Bill 84, the new Fire Protection and Prevention Act. As members are aware, the standing committee on administration of justice has recently completed public hearings and clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 84. The committee spent a total of seven days hearing from witnesses in Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor, Kingston, Thunder Bay and Sudbury.

As always, these hearings provided an excellent opportunity for all interested parties to offer suggestions and comments on the bill. Since this is the first time in almost 50 years that the fire service legislation in Ontario has been substantially amended, I felt it was particularly important to hear from people and organizations on all sides of the issues before the bill was finalized.

I want to take just a few moments here to thank all of the people who participated in the hearings and who made submissions. In particular, I want to thank the fire chiefs, the fire associations and the front-line firefighters, both full-time and volunteer, who attended the hearings. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the justice committee for the time and effort they put into seeing Bill 84 through the committee process.

In addition to the formal committee process, I've also been involved in a number of, I think it's fair to categorize them as, productive meetings with fire service stakeholders. As a result of these meetings and the hearings, we've made a very significant number of important amendments to the bill. In fact, I understand that the committee passed a number of amendments which were put forward by opposition members as well. In my view, this process has been an excellent demonstration of the way the parliamentary process can and should work.

We also adopted a number of proposals put forward by the associations representing both Ontario's fire chiefs and firefighters, and their advice was very helpful. For example, the fact that we have defined a fire chief as "the person who is ultimately responsible to the council of a municipality...for the delivery of fire protection services" recognizes that fire chiefs are the experts, they are the key advisers to council on public fire safety matters.

The committee also passed a number of housekeeping matters that clarify the language of the bill and will resolve misunderstandings.

We changed the language on pensions — this was a concern of many firefighters — to make it clear that OMERS pension rights are not affected by this legislation. That was our intention from the beginning, but concerns arose and we moved to clarify that.

We also dealt with issues regarding costs of mandatory conciliation and arbitration procedures. With respect to conciliation, Bill 84, as amended, provides that each side will now pay its own legal costs, and we expect that the Ministry of Labour will provide conciliators. On arbitration, each side will pay its own legal costs and both sides share the costs of the arbitrator. That was another concern of the associations.

On a major concern of the associations dealing with management exclusions from the bargaining unit, we've attempted to balance the needs of municipalities for flexibility in their management structure so they can effectively manage fire services with the concerns of firefighters related to the exclusion process. The bill will now allow firefighters to refuse automatic exclusions. They will be able to remain in the bargaining unit and enjoy full salary protection. This is called "red-circling," another major concern of the associations that we moved to address.

For non-automatic exclusions, the employer will now be able to apply to the Ontario Labour Relations Board for

a determination and the individual will remain in the bargaining unit until the board makes a decision regarding that individual's status. It was a concern of the associations that if an exclusion decision was made by management and while a decision was pending from the OLRB, that could jeopardize the status of that individual firefighter. Again, we've moved to address that concern.

We have also amended the sections of the bill dealing with hours of work and emergency recall, two very significant concerns of professional firefighters in this province. We've moved to address those so they can now be matters for negotiation between the parties, again recognizing those concerns of professional firefighters across this province.

Another major concern of firefighters' associations that we addressed through our amendments was certification and decertification procedures. They have been deleted from the bill, and the associations are deemed to be the bargaining agents for firefighters, a very significant move, a very significant amendment, a very clear recognition of the concerns of professional firefighters in this province.

Finally, we've clarified procedures during the transition period so that existing collective agreements continue to be recognized after the proposed bill comes into effect. This is in effect protection during amalgamations, municipal restructuring, protecting firefighters during that process.

As in every issue involving labour and management, no one got everything they wanted, but I must say there was significant movement, significant change in recognition of concerns and suggestions and proposals that we heard during the committee process and during discussions I and my staff had with members of various stakeholder organizations, with individual firefighters and with members of this Legislature.

There's no doubt in my mind that the legislation as amended will make it easier for fire departments to concentrate on their responsibilities for public fire safety. That really is the key to an effective fire service or any life-and-death emergency service: a cooperative work environment that strikes a balance and allows firefighters to get the job done, a balance and an environment that will improve public safety and save lives.

These amendments address many of the concerns raised by the various stakeholders, and I believe the final result is a piece of legislation we can all be proud of. I believe that as members of this Legislature we all share a common interest in developing legislation that helps municipalities provide all Ontarians with the best possible fire protection in the most efficient way.

I want to make this next point very clear: We have heard concerns raised that part-time firefighters or some other service delivery model, if adopted by a municipality, could compromise public safety.

1520

I want to indicate very strongly that that certainly will not happen. I would not allow it to happen; I would not allow public safety to be compromised, and I don't believe any Solicitor General who holds this office in the future would allow that to occur.

I want every member for this Legislature to know that Bill 84 will require — require — every municipality to

provide an appropriate level of fire protection that meets the needs and circumstances of its residents, whether they employ full-time, part-time, volunteers or a combination of these to deliver the service. This is a new initiative: a guarantee of protection to municipalities across this province.

This requirement will be backed by important new powers that will rest with the fire marshal of Ontario. If the fire marshal believes there is a serious threat to public safety, under Bill 84 he will have the authority to review municipal fire services and make recommendations to the municipal council, and if that serious threat is not corrected the government will now have the authority to directly regulate a solution. These are very, very important improvements in the legislative framework for fire safety in Ontario.

The bill also formally establishes the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council as a vehicle to develop partnerships with the private sector to promote fire safety. The fire service in Ontario, both professionals and volunteers, has made remarkable strides in reducing fire losses in the past 25 years. Those improvements are reflected in fire loss statistics: In the past 25 years, fire fatalities in Ontario have fallen by 60%, a dramatic improvement. In order to achieve further improvements in fire safety, we need to develop better methods of preventing fires rather than fighting them, and that's precisely the approach Bill 84 takes. It doesn't neglect fire suppression, but for the first time, it gives a special focus and equal weight to fire prevention and to public education as the best method of improving our fire prevention programs.

Fire prevention and public education are not new ideas. Fire departments across the province have been doing this for years. However, Bill 84 makes these activities mandatory — mandatory — and it obliges municipalities to provide these programs as part of their fire protection service. It also authorizes the fire marshal to assume a leadership role in helping municipalities develop these programs and in providing the necessary support materials. Personally, I am very optimistic about this approach. I believe it offers the best hope for further dramatic improvements in fire safety.

Prior to Bill 84, the legislation in the area of fire protection and prevention had not been substantially changed for decades. Change was clearly long overdue. In fact, all three parties in this Legislature have been involved in the fire services review, which dates back to 1983. I think there was significant frustration among many stakeholders about an inability to achieve a consensus, and I think the lack of ability to achieve a consensus was reflected here today. It's a very difficult challenge, and politics always enters into these kinds of equations. I think there was a responsibility, certainly a responsibility recognized by this government, that it was time to get on with the job and get it finished so that the fire chiefs and the front-line firefighters could get on with their job, the most important job of all: protecting the public from fire.

Taken together, I believe the changes made to the fire services legislation under Bill 84 will allow Ontario's

communities to be better protected from fire for decades to come.

I know this has been a difficult process for many of us involved, but I hope that following completion of this and following passage of the bill we can all work together in what I know is a shared interest of members of this House and members of fire services, no matter what role they play, for improved public safety in this province. That's certainly my commitment, and I know that behind all this, behind all the discussion, all the debate, all the disagreements, all of us have the best interests of Ontarians at heart.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Let me just say that I was involved in the hearings to some extent in my own municipality, and certainly the firefighters don't put as nice a shine on the whole situation as the Solicitor General has just done. As he has been requested to do a number of times, why doesn't he just withdraw part IX, that part of the bill that deals with the labour relations provisions, and I think I can say that pretty well everybody will be quite satisfied with the bill.

What you're doing in the labour relations provisions of this bill, in part IX, is taking away from the professional firefighters provisions and agreements that have been negotiated between themselves and the municipalities over the years. You are unilaterally taking those rights away. That is the essence of what this is really all about.

Second, of course, is this whole area of whether or not the fire services in a municipality can or cannot be privatized. Repeatedly you've stated that it's not the case. If it's not the case, why don't you specifically state so in the bill, that fire departments will remain municipal fire services or will be operated through the government? Why don't you just specifically put in the bill, if that is really your intent, the fact that a municipality cannot privatize its fire services?

That's what this bill is all about. You can put all sorts of beautiful lines on it and all sorts of beautiful images on how wonderfully everybody will get along afterwards. The fact still is that that's what the fire associations are concerned about: They are concerned about privatization of the fire services in their municipalities and they're concerned about you, the government, unilaterally withdrawing labour relations provisions that the associations in the individual municipalities throughout this province have fought for and have been able to obtain as a result of open and free collective bargaining and negotiations.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I listened carefully to what the member for Leeds-Grenville, the Solicitor General, had to say, and I must say that he attempts to put a gloss on the situation by saying, "It's been difficult — there's been disagreement, there's been controversy — but now we're going to make it work and everybody is going to get on." I'm sure the firefighters in this province will do everything they can to ensure that people are protected and properties are protected so we don't lose lives and we don't have property losses as a result of fire. They'll do everything to prevent those emergencies, and when they face them, they'll do their

best to serve the public and to protect the public and public safety.

What's disturbing about this process is that the government did not listen to what those firefighters had to say. The central issues that they brought before the committee the government did not deal with. To have members of the government party get up and say, "The petitions that were presented were all signed before the committee did its work and the amendments were passed, so therefore everything is fine," does not deal with the fact that there are firefighters in this province who are genuinely concerned about their collective bargaining rights and who are concerned about the future of municipal firefighting in this province if it is privatized, as has been suggested may in fact happen.

The fact is that this bill was designed through consultation with the fire chiefs. It did not respond to the concerns of the firefighters and it still doesn't. It's most unfortunate that through this whole process the government has basically said: "We're prepared to make minor changes, but the central issues that are raised by the firefighters we will not change. We will not respond to their concerns."

1530

The Acting Speaker: The Solicitor General has two minutes to respond.

Hon Mr Runciman: I appreciate the comments. I don't agree with any of them, but I appreciate the members' right to express their views and the views of their party.

The member for Kingston and The Islands talked about part IX. I think we have moved to address a number of the concerns that firefighters have posed related to part IX. But there are other concerns related to that section in terms of allowing other partners in the provision of fire services in this province to have some degree of flexibility in terms of the management of that service, and I think that's a needed balance that we've tried to achieve. Certainly it hasn't been without some challenge, but I think at the end of the day, we've done a pretty good job in achieving that balance.

Both the member from Kingston and the member for Algoma talked about privatization. This bill does not promote privatization. That's an option that already exists or existed under the Municipal Act. I found it quite ironic to see the press conference this morning where a number of municipal officials were talking about not agreeing to this. Well, municipal councils have had the option of consideration of privatization in the past under the Municipal Act and they're the folks who will have this option in the future. I think they tend to act in the best interests of their own citizens in terms of public safety questions. For them to now say that this is a new issue, that this is some new concern that's been placed on their plate is totally inaccurate. The opposition's attempts to continue to put forward the suggestion that we are in some way and some how promoting privatization is completely inaccurate.

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we should seek unanimous consent to the agreement we reached that this would be a five-minute bell at five minutes to 6.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? It is agreed. Further debate?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm going to seek the unanimous consent of the House to split the remainder of the time between the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party.

The Acting Speaker: Is that agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Bradley: I am going to be relatively brief this afternoon in speaking to Bill 84 because I had an opportunity to deal with the issues related to Bill 84 rather extensively during second reading when I indicated my very strong disapproval of many of the provisions of this piece of legislation.

The background to it, which I think is significant to members of the Provincial Federation of Ontario Fire Fighters and the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, is in fact the commitment of the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, during the election campaign that no significant changes would be made to the act until such time as there had been meaningful and extensive consultation with representatives of firefighters in the province. That commitment was not fulfilled, any more than the commitment was fulfilled when the Premier said, "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you I have no plans to close hospitals." Well, he had no plans, I guess, to make significant changes to fire safety and the provisions of acts related to fire safety in this province, but he did so without extensive and meaningful consultation.

It was only through the efforts of the opposition parties that we were able to extract from the government hearings which would be held not only for more than simply a week, but would be held for a longer period of time and in a number of different municipalities in Ontario so that representatives of firefighters and others interested in the bill could make representations to the committee as to changes which should be made to the legislation before it was brought to the House for third and final reading.

I heard the Solicitor General say that he would not allow fire safety and fire services in the province to deteriorate or not be as good as they could possibly be. It's very difficult to keep these commitments when the remainder of the cabinet, and particularly those who advise the Premier, are not necessarily going to be supportive of that in terms of the resources that are going to be provided to the Solicitor General.

The Solicitor General, for instance — and this is something we all face in each one of our communities — would like to see the psychiatric hospital in his community remain open, and I'm sure he will be a person who will fight for that to happen, but there's no guarantee when the rest of the cabinet don't agree that that's going to happen, and that's my concern.

I'm not doubting at all the commitment of the Solicitor General. I know him too well and have known him too long not to know that he has a sincere commitment to maintain adequate and good fire services in this province. My concern is that he will not be able to fulfil that commitment because of the advisers. Guy Giorno is probably the most powerful person, along with Tom Long, in terms of advising this government. They have more power than even the cabinet ministers have. I'm concerned that they'll be advising the Premier to continue

to cut taxes even further and further and therefore allow services to deteriorate, because we know that when the government cuts taxes, it has to get its money somewhere else. It has to get its money by cutting services or by borrowing money to pay for the tax cut. Neither option is sensible, and I'm sure people concerned about fire safety in this province would agree with me in saying that.

The firefighters have already had to deal with the provisions of the social contract in Ontario. They were concerned about that in years gone by. They've had to live with those cuts, with the money they were receiving, the compensation they were receiving, but they have lived through that and they weren't looking for a further assault on their pocketbooks or on the provisions of their collective agreements. Yet that's what this bill is doing, even though certain modifications have been made.

The professional firefighters represented in our galleries today by their leadership are people who are well-trained, competent, experienced, committed and prepared to deal with emergencies that relate to fires in this province. Any chance that that would change through the provisions of this legislation is not acceptable to them as individuals who are concerned about fire safety in the province, nor is it acceptable to anyone else in the province who relies upon the services of professional firefighters to maintain fire safety within their homes, their businesses, their industries and various institutions in the province.

We have people who are well trained. More and more now, when a young person wants to join a fire department, to be considered for employment in a fire department, that person is out taking courses. Some of the firefighters themselves are taking additional courses to upgrade and update themselves on new dangers that present themselves because of new chemicals or new substances or new emergencies that might arise. Again, I worry, with the provisions of this bill, particularly part IX, that we're going to see some significant and adverse changes in that regard.

Something that may not be of great significance to some people in the province, because we've not had a strike of firefighters in the province, is the fact that the government has removed the right to strike for firefighters through the provisions of this legislation. Let me tell you, firefighters have never exercised that right and many have said that under no circumstances they foresee would they ever exercise that particular right. It was a source of pride, and has been for many years, for members of our fire departments across this province to say of their own volition that they will not be out on strike, because they recognize they're an essential emergency service.

I consider the provision in this bill that prohibits that as, yes, appealing to management types, appealing perhaps to business, but certainly not appealing to fairminded Ontarians who believe that when people give a commitment on their own not to exercise the right to strike, they should not receive a slap in the face by writing that into legislation. I'm prepared to accept the firefighters' undertaking in this province that they are not going to strike. I don't need it written in legislation,

because I know the people who are involved with fire departments across this province in each of our communities. They are individuals who are competent, talented, very, very professional people on the job. Off the job they're often people who are involved in community service in a variety of ways. I know in our own community hospitals have been the recipients of some of the largess, some of the volunteer work of firefighters in St Catharines and the surrounding area.

1540

No matter where you go, when an emergency exists — I think even with the Manitoba flood I heard in some municipalities that you could bring certain items to help out the people in Manitoba to the fire department, to fire stations. That's not the exception; that's the norm in dealing with firefighters in this province. That's why I find it astounding that the government would bring forward legislation of this kind, which represents an insult to firefighters right across the province.

One of the insidious provisions is the provision that allows for privatization. Let's be serious about this. This is a matter that in the past people might have said was not to be considered in a serious manner. Today it is, since so many in this government, particularly those who advise the Premier, the brain trust who are not elected but advise the Premier, adhere to the policies and pronouncements of those south of the border, the Republican guard, the right wing of the Republican Party, who worship at the idol of privatization of every possible service. Because I know this government believes, at least many of its members, that privatization in as many fields as possible is desirable, it seems to me that firefighters and people in our communities have reason to be concerned about the potential for privatization.

There's a company called Rural/Metro that is in the ambulance service south of the border. Members may recall one day in the House I asked the Minister of Health, who was then Mr Johnson — he was acting Minister of Health at the time — about Rural/Metro moving in and taking over ambulance services because the province is bailing out of that. The province, which has had responsibility, appropriately so, for ambulance services in this province has bailed out, has detached itself, has totally detached itself from the provision of those services.

So what happens? My friend the member for Welland-Thorold has described in this House on a number of occasions the lineup at the Peace Bridge of people waiting on the other side of the bridge, on the other side of the border, to —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I should say to the whip that I'm not offended by the member's interjection, so I wouldn't worry too much about that. Anyway, the member has described how they are lined up on the other side of the border, waiting to move in, and in some cases they're already here providing a service.

What you find out is that when they first cross the border, that service is relatively cheap, and they try to stay within the confines of the regulations in this province, though heaven forbid, this province is getting rid of as many regulations as possible. My friend the member

for Lincoln, Frank Sheehan, is in charge of getting rid of all this regulatory regime that we have.

I worry when I see these companies coming into this province because I don't think many municipalities want to take over the service. Some don't have the wherewithal to do it, the financial resources, some simply don't want to be involved with it because they think it's the responsibility of the provincial government, so we may see some considerable privatization of that service.

You should know that south of the border Rural/Metro will do some fire services as well. They say, "Give us the ambulance services and we'll give you the fire services free." That happens; the member knows, my friend the parliamentary assistant. I don't mind her interjecting. I know the whip was kind enough to suppress some of the interjections. I want to tell her, however, that I'm prepared to listen to her interjections in my usual jocular fashion, even though I'm not in a very jocular frame of mind this afternoon, I might add. However —

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): We heard that; your caucus was telling us.

Mr Bradley: The NDP has heard that "however."

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Another hang-over.

Mr Bradley: That is a comment, I should tell the member back there, you should never make in this House. Never make that in this House, because I can tell you it would not be the case.

I want to say that privatization, then, is a genuine concern we have in this province. I think if we saw the privatization of fire services, we would see a deterioration in that service. I know you think there are companies south of the border that can do this. I think the people in the rural areas have more to worry about immediately than those of us in the urban areas. I hope, even though in this House they may not agree with me, they'll go back to the caucus and say: "Was Bradley right? When he's saying this about Rural/Metro, should we be concerned?"

I know you should be concerned, because the cost of ambulance service just across the border in Buffalo is way higher than it is across the border in Fort Erie. That's Rural/Metro providing that service. They'll want that. When they get into fire services, if they're allowed to, they'll start off by providing the service at a lower cost. Maybe the cost will be lower and sustained at a lower level, but the degree of service, the kind of service, the quality of service will not be nearly as good as it is at the present time.

The use of volunteers around the province is accepted. There are many communities that have volunteer fire departments. They work in conjunction with our professional firefighters in many communities. I don't think you should try to portray a situation where you want to mix up part-time firefighters with volunteer firefighters. When we talk about part-time firefighters, they are part of a regular fire department in a community in a city such as St Catharines. You're going to allow now some part-time people in under the provisions — that's the concern, some part-time people — so that you don't have full-time firemen and firewomen in the fire department fighting the fires. There's a great deal of concern about that.

You're talking about the call-back system. That is, a municipality, presumably, would be allowed to understaff a firehall and, let us say, not have the regular number of firefighters in that firehall ready for an emergency. Anyone who understands anything about fire services in a community, however, understands that the initial response of the fire department is exceedingly important. A fire doubles in size very quickly, every minute. For instance, if you were four minutes into a fire, you have 16 times the size of the fire normally that you would when you started out, so you want the fire department to get there as quickly as possible, not have to phone somebody else who is on part-time to show up at the firehall but rather to be able to go out and suppress that fire immediately. You'll save money in the long run, particularly in insurance rates and in insurance payouts.

I invite members of the assembly to look at the US experience. We now have the Internet. You can get all kinds of information on the Internet about some of the dire experiences south of the border. It's just a matter of time until that comes here if the advisers to the Premier are to have their way, as opposed to perhaps some of the government members who might be able to persuade the Premier otherwise in the caucus, although I know the consequences of doing that. My friend Gary Carr is no longer a parliamentary assistant; he was to the Solicitor General, I believe.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Why?

Mr Bradley: He dared to speak out, I think, on some issues. Of course in this government one is not supposed to speak out. The ones who move up most quickly are those who are, shall I say, closest to the Premier — I'll leave it at that — in terms of their agreement with the Premier; I'll even clarify that further.

We lost the parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General. Maybe he had a different view on this particular item; I don't know. I kind of think he did. He's a more practical person than many of the people I see who are unelected.

This bill is clearly on the side of management. I think what you have to have when you bring in legislation is a balance; you have to have something that will satisfy both, that will draw consensus from both. I think you've altered this bill substantially on the side of management as opposed to the front-line employees and ultimately the people of the communities they serve.

1550

I want to emphasize the importance of the hearings. We have, as I say, representatives of firefighters in the gallery today, and have had for some time, and I want to tell you, I haven't seen a group that has been more dedicated in putting their case before the committee. Every day, they were there. Every day in every community, they were there, so that they could monitor the hearings, so that they could monitor the representations which were made and come up with corrections and responses appropriately. If it weren't for these individuals and the work of the opposition parties, my guess is we would have seen even fewer changes than the modest changes that we've seen on the part of the government to the original legislation. So those hearings that we in the opposition fought for were exceedingly important.

I'm sure that firefighters would prefer not to see a vote today. I agree with them on that, because that's what third reading is about. Why should the government not proceed with third reading? I think I have given many of those reasons.

It is not mandatory for municipalities to provide fire suppression services. We expect they're going to, but there's no mandatory provision, and I'll tell you why that is. That's because the Ontario government is now downloading on municipalities, so those who are involved in fire services are going to be worried. They're saying, "If the provincial government is downloading more and new responsibility, with new costs tied to that new responsibility, on the backs of the municipalities, then those involved in providing firefighting services are going to have to be in a position of fighting for every dollar they can get," because we know that the provincial government would like to go to the people of this province and say, "See, we cut your income tax by 30%." But of course your property tax, which does not take into account a person's ability to pay, the most regressive tax we have, or user fees, which are regressive taxes as well, will have increased substantially. My worry is that fire departments are now going to have to fight even harder to get the smaller share of the budget that's going to be available to municipalities in Ontario, and that does not bode well for fire services or other services.

I think the best thing the government could do today is agree with the opposition that they should not proceed with third reading of this bill, that they should withdraw the bill, go back to the drawing board, genuinely consult with people in the province, particularly the front-line people in the delivery of firefighting services, and that ultimately they should come up with a bill which is more acceptable and more of a consensus-builder than this one is.

This bill is not satisfactory. Our party will be voting against this legislation. I, unfortunately, will not be able to join them this afternoon. I voted against it on second reading, and were I able to be here at 6 o'clock, I'd be voting against it again on third. However, my demands are in my municipality, where I'm the guest speaker at the Excellence in Education banquet in St Catharines where we'll be paying tribute to many young people and not-so-young people who have excelled in the field of education. I want to pay tribute to them through the auspices of this debate this afternoon.

I am not a malicious person. I wish the Solicitor General well in trying to manage under this new legislation. It will be a major challenge, and I think we would be better off if the government House leader would say, "Look, we're going to withdraw this bill this afternoon, and we're not going to proceed with this bill," or, "We're going to take it back and modify it even further." But I don't expect that's going to happen, because the die has been cast. The decision has been made by the unelected people in the Premier's office that you're moving forward, and the only responsibility others will have is to stand up when the whip tells you to stand up. That's most unfortunate, but, as Walter Cronkite always ended off his newscasts, "That's the way it is."

Mr Kormos: At the onset, I introduce my comments with this observation, only because I think they're incredibly important and I wouldn't want to omit them by oversight. I tell you, I am extremely grateful, and I believe the people of this province are and certainly should be extremely grateful, as are the memberships of these two organizations, to Jim Lee, the president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, and to Bruce Carpenter, who is the president of the Provincial Federation of Ontario Fire Fighters. I say that because they have, with great courage and tenacity and yes, insight, struggled over the course of the last several months, confronting Bill 84 and exposing it as an incredibly dangerous, malicious and very foolhardy piece of legislation.

At the end of the day, and notwithstanding the spin that the government has tried to and is going to persist in putting on this legislation, Bill 84 is going to mean some very definite and specific things in the community where I live down in Welland-Thorold, communities across the region, communities across this province, be they in northern Ontario, southern Ontario, the east or the west, and I'll tell you what's going to happen if Tories here today support Bill 84: There are going to be fewer firefighters available for emergencies. That's the long and short of it. There is going to be the utilization, and increased utilization, of part-time firefighters. That's going to mean that part-timers, whose first commitment isn't to firefighting, are going to be used, part-timers with less training and less experience.

The bill, at the end of the day, is all about the privatization of firefighting services in each and every community in this province. We have heard about it over the course of several weeks of public hearings, and we're going to be observing it once this bill is passed and receives royal assent. American corporate, for-profit, private firefighting services are going to be invading this province, at the behest, at the invitation of Harris and his Tories, to take over firefighting services; for-profit firefighting services whose sole motive is to generate more profits and not to protect the communities that our professional firefighters now serve or the safety of individuals within those communities.

Bill 84 is going to expand the bureaucracies. It's going to increase levels of management in firefighting services in each and every municipality in this province. In some cases it will go so far as to triple the management ranks. The question, simply put, is this: Why would this government want to turn firefighters into bureaucrats, mere minions, when in fact firefighting is done by women and men out there in the field working together, with experience and as a team?

Teamwork: We know, and if people don't, they'd better well learn darned soon, that speed, experience and teamwork in firefighting is what saves lives. Bill 84 jeopardizes teamwork, the teamwork that protects property and saves lives, in both fire emergencies and medical emergencies, on a daily basis in this province. Teamwork indeed is vital to saving lives, and Bill 84 and this government, by reducing the number of firefighters in the province, by using part-timers and turning more and more firefighters into bureaucrats, into managers, is going to

not just erode but directly attack the teamwork that has been so effective historically here in Ontario.

I don't think the government should be particularly proud of this legislation. I think Ontarians should be frightened, extremely frightened, as I am, about the potential this legislation has for jeopardizing lives and property on a daily basis across the province. You know today that over 200,000 petitioners, almost a quarter of a million, had their petitions filed with this government, indicating clearly to the Tories here at Queen's Park that Bill 84 and those aspects of it which will not just accommodate but encourage privatization, those aspects of it which are going to impact and affect and erode teamwork, those aspects of it that are going to introduce part-time firefighters into our communities, are a cause for great fear among a large number, a vast number of Ontarians.

1600

It's been put to us that communities would be disinclined to contract with private firefighting services, and we've heard the stories. We've heard about Rural/Metro down in Arizona. We've had them put to this House during the course of question period, during the course of members' statements, during the course of debate on second reading. Rural/Metro — some track record. Rural/Metro: American corporate, for-profit, privatized firefighting services. Read some of the news clippings from down in Arizona. Rural/Metro charges outrageous tariffs and fees to households that want to avail themselves of its so-called firefighting services.

Rural/Metro is plagued by stories of pumper trucks breaking down within metres, but sufficient distance away, of the house on fire that the truck is ineffective, and then the homeowner gets charged for the tow bill to boot. Rural/Metro has pumpers show up at residential, domestic firefighting scenes with not enough water in their pumper truck to last but a few minutes and Rural/Metro sits there idle while hardworking homeowners stand and watch their house go down in flames with the inherent risk of danger to persons that occurs in any fire.

This government is engaged in a veritable orgy of privatization. It is attacking every single public service it can identify and exposing it to its passion for privatization. It's a great tradeoff for Harris's rich corporate buddies. It's the payola, it's the grease, it's the payback.

Privatization — we've already witnessed Rural/Metro and Laidlaw, two corporate endeavours that carry with them a whole lot of baggage. You know exactly what I mean. They have come in here, and in the case of Rural/Metro already purchased — an American corporate, for-profit company purchasing six of our municipal ambulance services; Laidlaw in here purchasing other ambulance services. Their motive isn't to save lives, it isn't to protect people in the event of medical emergencies; it's to make profits. They're going to do it by using the least experienced staff possible, by paying them the lowest possible wages and by investing as little as possible in their services while reaping as much revenue as they possibly can. That's where profits are generated.

Rural/Metro and Laidlaw, in the course of buying up municipal ambulance services — we've got companies

that have set up shop right now here in Toronto that are going to be out there in short order, some of them already are, ready to purchase municipal water and sewer systems so that they will no longer belong to the public, so that there will no longer be any public control or governance over them and so that they will be operated on a for-profit basis.

The experience in Great Britain, when it came to privatized water and sewer systems, was water rates that doubled and tripled, the infrastructure — the piping, the water filtration systems that people rely on for clean water and healthy water — falling into decay because again, you've got companies whose sole motive is to make more and more profits and who don't give a tinker's dam about the welfare of the communities they're supposed to be serving.

This orgy of privatization has now extended into firefighting. You see, communities like Pelham — and folks in Pelham, I mentioned it earlier today, believed the Conservatives back in 1995 when those folks were promised that there would be no tax increases and no property tax increases. They read it, they saw it in black and white. It was in the blue book. Folks in Pelham just learned that for the year 1997 — and that's before the impact of the mega-dump of a couple of months ago, revised as it was but a couple of weeks ago — they are going to be paying on average just shy of 100 bucks a year in new property taxes for the 1997 budget.

They're going to be paying even more in new taxes once the mega-dump on Pelham and Welland and Thorold and St Catharines and Niagara Falls and Port Colborne and Lincoln, every municipality in Niagara, every municipality across this province, has more and more downloaded on it by this government that is intent and hell-bent on seeing property taxes go up, impacting on seniors and young families. I'm convinced it will force some people out of their homes — hardworking, decent people.

It will also force municipalities into considering and indeed falling for the lure of contracting out and privatization, so they can be relieved of the fiscal burden of maintaining properly trained, professional, publicly employed firefighting services and firefighters. It's going to be at great expense at the end of the day to each and every one of those communities. This government is not only opening the door, this government has laid out the red carpet to for-profit, American, corporate, contracting-out firefighting services.

I mentioned to you the outstanding work done by Bruce Carpenter from the Provincial Federation of Ontario Fire Fighters and by Jim Lee from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. I want to tell you they have volunteer firefighters across this province. The government in a very cynical and quite frankly malicious way tried very much at the onset of this exercise over Bill 84 to pit volunteer firefighters against professional firefighters. You were here when it happened. You heard the Solicitor General try to generate a schism between those two groups of committed people: the volunteers and the career firefighters, the professionals. I'm telling you, Speaker, it didn't work, because volunteers from Welland-Thorold, among volunteers from every other

community in this province that utilizes volunteer firefighters, joined their professional colleagues in saying no to Bill 84, no to part-time firefighters, no to privatization of firefighters, no to the attack on teamwork that Bill 84 imposes on firefighting services across the province.

Thousands upon thousands upon thousands — almost a quarter of a million — names were on petitions presented today, and hundreds of people appeared before the committee on Bill 84 to say no to this government and this government simply preferred not to listen. It was oblivious to the pleas, to the cries of people from across this province.

We heard from victims of fires who understood how important professional firefighters were to their rescue or to their children's rescue and how the creation of contracted-out, privatized, for-profit, corporate, US-based firefighting services is going to cost lives and it's going to cost big bucks when it comes to property. We heard from them very directly, very dramatically, very tragically, but I tell you this government didn't listen.

I've got to tell you as well that were some people on the committee who did listen: the parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, Gary Carr. I'm convinced the parliamentary assistant was beginning to understand how valid the criticisms of Bill 84 were. He had listened. He was responding to members of communities and to firefighters and to expertise that came from across Canada and internationally as well telling us as Ontarians to reject Bill 84 in no uncertain terms because Bill 84 is going to endanger property, and tragically it's going to end up costing lives.

What happened to Gary Carr? The parliamentary assistant had been doing an exemplary job. He and I aren't of the same party and quite frankly our political views are more often opposed than not, but I have no hesitation in telling you that I had great confidence in and great praise for the work Gary Carr, the parliamentary assistant, was doing with respect to Bill 84. He was listening on behalf of the government. He was asking questions of firefighters that indicated he understood that this bill was all about privatization, that this bill was all about using part-time, less experienced, less well-trained firefighters than the professional, full-time, extremely skilled firefighters — 9,000 of them — who protect lives and communities across Ontario today.

I'll tell you what his reward was. On the last day of the public hearings Gary Carr got dumped. He got fired. He got dismissed. He got sent home. He was told he was no longer a part of the process.

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There were a couple of other PAs who went the same route. They had some interesting insights into the operation of this government and indeed spoke about them publicly. They spoke about the dictatorship that exists within the upper echelons of the government, the inability of this Premier to tolerate criticism or dissent from within the Tories' own ranks.

Why, Bill Murdoch — he's the member from up Owen Sound way; you know Bill Murdoch — said that if you're going to get anywhere in this government you have to pucker up. He didn't share with us the anatomical relationships that had to be developed subsequent to

puckering up, but our imaginations served us reasonably well. Murdoch said you had to pucker up.

It's clear that Gary Carr wasn't going to pucker up. Gary Carr was going to call it the way it was, and he knew that Bill 84 was all about privatization. You know what? The government had a chance. During the course of clause-by-clause, I've got to tell you, it was and remains hard to take government members in any way, shape or form seriously. Government members who were sitting on that committee would take a look at the fabric of this chair and insist that it was green. They figured that if you kept saying it's green, people are going to believe it's green rather than the blue that it obviously is.

Ontarians aren't going to fall for that, the opposition members of the committee aren't going to fall for it, firefighters and volunteers and people concerned about the safety of their communities aren't going to fall for it, and Gary Carr didn't fall for it, but he ended up being cut off at the knees.

There was a glimpse of democracy, there was the most modest hope for a little bit of meaningful committee work, when at the last minute, at the 11th hour, Carr got cut loose, sent home. Why? Because he listened, and this government has no tolerance for any of its members who listen. This government, in its quest to privatize public services in this province, will even cannibalize its own, chew 'em up and spit 'em out, if they dare to start to understand how dangerous the agenda of this government has been and continues to be.

I've got some real concerns. I've got concerns for the folks over at 211 King Street in Welland, the seniors. Welland, until a few years ago, didn't have a whole lot of high-rises, but 211 is a seniors residence. It's all elderly people, some older than others, some more mobile than others, many who because of their age are starting to lose a little bit of their hearing, some of their sight, many who can't get around as quickly or as agilely as they used to.

I've got fear for them and they've got fear for themselves, because they know that without the fully trained professional firefighters the Welland fire department has now, aided as it is by very skilled volunteers, but without those professional firefighters, full-time, working, as committed and well trained as they are as public servants, in the event of the tragedy of a fire at 211 King Street there may well be some significant, tragic loss of life. I'm afraid for them and, I tell you, they're afraid for themselves.

That's why when it came time for them to sign the petition over at the Seaway Mall up on Niagara Street in Welland — that's where firefighters went out asking people if they wanted a chance to express their views on Bill 84 — seniors in Welland signed by the hundreds, saying no to Bill 84, understanding full well that Bill 84 endangers the professional, full-time firefighting services that are provided by our brave women and men in the firefighting services now and will replace them with part-timers, poorly trained, far less motivated, and by corporate, for-profit, American-style, privatized firefighting services which bring with them incredible baggage and a track record one would be generous to describe even as

deplorable. We've got some real damage, some real mischief being done here and now.

I want to say this to the government members: I know there are going to be more than a few government members who simply aren't going to show up for the vote today. Mark my words. There are going to be some who are sufficiently repelled by this legislation that they're going to take what's called colloquially at Queen's Park a walk. They're simply not going to be around for the vote. I know there are going to be more than a few; they've told me. They've asked me not to name them because they don't want to be singled out for the punishment and retribution that their House leader and whip and leader's office can mete out to less-than-docile backbenchers. But mark my words, there are going to be more than a few not present.

If I had my druthers — I spoke with them, I said: "It's time to stand up and be counted. Show a little spine. Show a little backbone, a little bit of courage." That's what voters in this province expect of their MPPs. There are Tory backbenchers who know that Bill 84 is all about privatization; there are a lot of them. It's all about privatization, it's all about the replacement of professional full-time firefighters with part-timers and it's all about eroding the teamwork that professional firefighters have developed over years of training and commitment, the teamwork that saves lives. You see, people are going to die as a result of Bill 84. There's simply no question about it. It's tragic, but those are the inevitable consequences of this abandonment of professional firefighters in Ontario.

As often as not the argument was put forward by any number of government committee members as they puckered up that no municipality would want to provide less than the optimum level of firefighting services. Give me a break, please. We know better than that. There was evidence put to the committee in that regard, that municipalities, under pressure for a number of years now and increased pressure now because of the incredible downloading of this government, the one that promised no new taxes, no increases in property taxes — they promised that, it is in their blue book.

Now we see in the case of Pelham a property tax hike of almost \$100 for the year 1997 alone and more next year and more the year after, and fewer and fewer services, mind you. We've seen municipalities chipping away at firefighting services, quite frankly, over a number of years. We learned a whole lot of interesting things, and I'm extremely grateful to the participants in the hearings who educated the committee members, and indeed the members of the public who were present at each and every location of these committee hearings, inevitably to the tune of a full hall, to standing room only. We learned that speed is essential, literally seconds are essential, that response time is the single most important factor when it comes time to save property and, more important, when it comes time to save lives.

We're talking about the lives of kids, we're talking about the lives of hardworking, decent, honest people, we're talking about the lives of seniors, none of whom deserve to die in the flames and in the painful agony of death by fire. We learned that people can be saved, lives

can be saved, kids and their parents and their grandparents can be saved, when response time is reduced to the lowest possible time.

We also learned, though, that part-time firefighters are — and the experience is there. We read the report done in Durham, USA, where they had experimented with part-time firefighters for a period of a decade-plus and where the experience with part-time firefighters was that part-time firefighters extended the response time, and when you lengthen the response time, people get seriously injured and people die. There's simply no question about it. The point isn't debatable. When you extend response time like Bill 84 is going to extend response time, people die the most painful and agonizing of deaths engulfed by flames. That's what Bill 84 is going to do to response time. The studies available from the United States, where there have been experiments with this proposition, illustrate that in a most dramatic and irrefutable way.

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We also learned — an interesting observation — that on a pumper truck, when it's staffed by but three firefighters as compared to the appropriate number, four, notwithstanding that its response time is appropriate, when it's staffed by only three people it's impossible to effect rescues inside a burning structure. With three firefighters it's impossible to effect rescues inside a fire structure and it's also impossible to effect fire suppression from inside the structure, both of which are essential, crucial to saving property and, far more significantly, quite frankly, to saving lives.

In response to the proposition by these guys — who sat on that committee oh so smugly spouting the government line like little Mattel dolls, where you pull the string, like little Chatty Cathys, wind them up and they pucker up and spout the spin doctors' line — notwithstanding that they're confronted day after day after day by the realities of the need for adequate staffing and prompt response time, we learned that community after community, notwithstanding the Ontario fire marshal's own requirement and own directive, based on experiences from Rhode Island, across the United States and across Canada that you need a minimum of four staff people on a pumper truck if you're going to effect rescues or you're going to do internal fire suppression, among other things, we learned that municipality after municipality has reduced their staffing of pumper trucks to but three firefighters, sometimes only two.

So I'm afraid we can't rely upon the mere goodwill of municipal councils; less so as they become increasingly cash-strapped by a government that insists on download after download after download of new taxation on to those municipalities. We quite frankly can't rely upon municipalities to necessarily aspire to the highest standard, and this Bill 84 drastically, dramatically and tragically reduces the standards for firefighting in Ontario.

What was most troubling, I've got to tell you, was the dismissal of Gary Carr as the parliamentary assistant, because he's the liaison, he's the right-hand person to the Solicitor General. Gary Carr as the PA is the one who reports back to the Sol Gen and tells the Sol Gen what he

and the other committee members have been hearing throughout the course of these public hearings. Why hold them if there's not going to be that reporting back? Why bother, unless it's but a scam, a little bit of show trial to impress the citizenry, to try to contradict the allegations, quite sound ones, I must say, from the Skaricas and the Murdochs and the Carrs of the world that this government is but a dictatorship run out of the back rooms of Mike Harris's office?

Gary Carr, having heard the evidence from firefighters, from experts within the province and beyond the province, even beyond our national boundaries, having heard from citizenry — parents, seniors and children — about how important full-time professional firefighters are to our safety, was dumped. And I'll tell you he was fired within a matter of mere minutes when the message went out. He was yanked, he was gone, he was out of there, then replaced by a parliamentary assistant who had no experience with the bill, who had no background in the days and weeks of hearings that had taken place prior and who, when he showed up in Windsor, was more intent on reading the damn newspaper than he was on listening to people who were making submissions. People in the audience were outraged and brought it to my attention. They were. This so-called parliamentary assistant was sitting there reading Ann Landers or Dear Abby, whatever the heck it was, as if advice for his problems is going to end up in either of those columns, instead of listening to the submissions that were being made.

I'll tell you what we did. In what I thought was a generous gesture we proposed and indeed moved, especially as we were about one day away from the crucial clause-by-clause consideration, that the hearings process be deferred for I believe it was a mere three weeks to give the parliamentary assistant a chance at least to read the Hansard transcripts so he could be brought up to date, up to speed, if you will, on what had transpired.

I tell you there was a lot of puckering up done from the government benches that morning, because after some hasty huddles and some pretty obvious body language coming from the parliamentary assistant, that proposition was rejected.

You've got to wonder why this government has been so eager to ignore the incredible and wide-based criticism of this bill and literally ram it through. Bill 84, I tell you, is a recipe for disaster. Bill 84 has lethal consequences for people of this province. Bill 84 has been criticized not just by professional firefighters but by the International Association of Fire Chiefs. In a letter dated April 4 the International Association of Fire Chiefs pointed out, among other things, that several communities over the recent past have experimented with privatization and that in many of those cases the efforts to privatize have resulted in failure and a return to public fire protection. They also rejected the proposition of cost-saving, because as was pointed out earlier by the member for St Catharines, the private sector will move in with low-ball offers, but once they've got control, once they've got ownership of that particular service, the bills start pouring in.

We heard from Michael Prue, the mayor of East York, who told the committee that three areas of privatization by that municipality have resulted in outright disaster, a

diminished level of services and increased costs to the municipality, and as soon as current contracts have expired they're going to restore those three sectors back to public service and public supervision.

Ontarians do not buy into privatized firefighting services, and Bill 84 is all about privatization, Americanization, corporatization of firefighting to the detriment of members of each and every community in this province.

This is an opportunity for Tory backbenchers to stand up and speak on behalf of their communities. This is a chance for Tory backbenchers to earn back the respect of their constituencies, to read through and see through the drivel that's come out of the spin doctors around Bill 84.

It was an embarrassment, I tell you, during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill when the parliamentary assistant at first would not respond to queries about section after section after section of the bill, and then when he attempted to respond, when he was cajoled, forced, prodded into responding, indicated that he could not. He knew zip about the legislation and was prepared and content to do nothing more than read the little scripted blurbs that had been provided to him by his masters, yanking his chain, yanking his leash at their whim from the back rooms of the Premier's office, masters who no doubt included some of the rich buddies of this government who have a strong interest in privatization because they are some of the same corporate actors who stand to make a great deal of money on the backs of Ontarians, with great pain and great risk to the welfare of Ontarians.

1630

Over the course of a whole lot of time, I have got to know the firefighters down in Niagara pretty well and have got to meet and know firefighters from across this province — not all 9,000 of them but a darn good chunk of them — pretty well, and I tell you, we couldn't ask for a more dedicated, a more professional, a more courageous group of women and men.

These are people who put their lives on the line every single day and who at a moment's notice are not only called upon but are prepared to barge into buildings in flames, searching on their hands and knees, because sight is of no use — the smoke creates a blackness that can't be penetrated — searching hopefully for still-alive bodies of children and other victims in closets, under beds and on the floors of burning buildings. Bill 84 is an insult to each and every one of them.

Just last Monday over in Kenmore, New York — and the reason I feel comfortable talking about firefighters over in Kenmore, New York, is that there has been a strong rapport, a strong relationship between the Welland fire department and their sisters and brothers in Kenmore. They have twinned, effectively. They make exchanges of training programs and of social events as well; they've developed a strong bond, a strong camaraderie between the two groups of firefighters. But just last Monday, nine firefighters, perhaps 10, were seriously injured when they fell victim to a wall of a commercial building that had caught fire, a fire to which they were attending. One of them suffered a broken back; others had serious injuries, ranging to more modest injuries that permitted a few to remain mobile after the fire.

I spoke with some of the people from the Kenmore fire department over at the Royal Canadian Legion in Welland, where Volunteer Fire Company Number 1 was having its annual dinner. They're about to celebrate their 100th anniversary in a couple of years. The people from Kenmore, their chief and some of their other executives, were over with their spouses, and I got a chance to speak with them. When I spoke — as I had a chance to speak to this group of firefighters, volunteers and professionals mixed — I told them that all of us pray for a full and speedy recovery for our sisters and brothers from Kenmore, but that the tragic injuries suffered by those firefighters a week ago last Monday serve to remind us that firefighters on a daily basis are confronted by the prospect of serious physical injury and, yes indeed, death.

This government has abandoned those committed professionals. This government has dismissed them with disdain and disregard with Bill 84. On behalf of the folks in Welland-Thorold and of Niagara and all those people who have cried out against Bill 84, I tell you that we in the New Democratic Party are going to be voting solidly against this legislation. This is an attack, indeed an insult, to professional firefighters.

It's an open door and an invitation and an accommodation and facilitation of privatization, an embrace of those American for-profit corporations that want to raid this province, with the red carpet laid out by Harris and his gang, and replace long-traditional, quality public services with American-style privatized services, which I tell you Ontarians didn't vote for in 1995 and won't tolerate in 1997.

I'm proud to be standing, as are my colleagues, with firefighters in this province. We'll continue to stand with them. We'll continue to stand with them and other public servants in this province, shoulder to shoulder, as we will fight and struggle against the privatization agenda of this corporate buddy, Harris and his gang, as they put our public services on the auction block to make great profits, new profits, for their corporate buddies at the expense of all Ontarians.

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I'm glad to have this opportunity to speak on Bill 84, An Act to promote Fire Prevention and Public Safety in Ontario and to amend and repeal certain other Acts relating to Fire Services. This legislation, introduced last fall by the minister, consolidates nine different acts: the Accidental Fires Act; the Egress from Public Buildings Act; the Fire Accidents Act; the Fire Departments Act; the Firefighters Exemption Act; the Firefighters Protection Act; the Fire Marshals Act; the Hotel Fire Safety Act; and the Lightning Rods Act.

One thing we should remember is that our firefighters, whether they be paid or volunteer, work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. They don't have the luxury that many of our other constituents have.

The Solicitor General's decision to bring the bill forward has caused concern among firefighters in my riding as well as many public citizens. They feel that Bill 84 strips firefighters of their right to strike even though the firefighters have never struck, to my knowledge, in Ontario, and I've known many of them for many years.

Bill 84 also increases the number of hours that firefighters may work each week and Bill 84 allows municipalities to privatize the firefighting service.

Many people have responded to the provisions of Bill 84 by calling it disrespectful to our volunteer fire departments and paid fire departments. In my opinion, firefighters have a strong code of ethics about their work; they know the service they provide may mean life or death. In respect of their hard work and their moral code, firefighters have never walked off the job over wages or for any other reason. To my knowledge, there has never been an injury in Ontario because firefighters refused to do their job. For the Solicitor General and his cabinet colleagues to play petty politics on paper by stripping their right to strike is a real insult to the people of Ontario.

Some people in my riding have also said that besides being disrespectful, Bill 84 could actually put the public at risk. I know it's not what the firefighters want, because they're there to protect the public, and I know many of them personally. As Mr Luc Richer, a spokesman for the Cornwall firefighters, told the public last month, this bill compromises safety.

Mr Richer stated, and I quote from an article in the Cornwall media, "By implementing Bill 84, not only our safety as firefighters will be affected, but your safety as a taxpayer as well." The Cornwall firefighters tried to participate in hearings on Bill 84 but were not granted a spot.

I know the other side is that many rural communities in my area benefit from very fine volunteer firemen. I don't want to take anything away from them, because they are hardworking and work with our paid fire departments. Our volunteers are just as good as a service club. They collect toys, they raise money for projects and do an extremely good job in the community.

I promised to keep my comments short because I know many in our caucus would like to say a few words, but I want to say loud and clear for the many people in my riding that they have many reservations about Bill 84 as it stands. To our firefighters and volunteers firefighters, I wish them well. Keep up the good work.

I just want to say that I know they will pass this bill, probably today, and I wish the minister luck, but I don't think it's too late yet to reconsider and listen to some of the firefighters who protect all our interests. They're just like medical doctors: We never know when we'll need them next.

1640

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): This is, unfortunately, a sad day for firefighting in Ontario. Today marks the day the government of Ontario decides they're going to bring, finally, third reading to this particular bill and a vote some time before five to six of the clock tonight.

I say it's a sad day because there has been a long and proud tradition of firefighting in Ontario. We have seen over the past number of years an evolution of the fire services in this province. Why? Mainly because of a couple of things; first of all, because the firefighters in the province have been people who have come to this thing as professionals, they have been innovative from the beginning, they have made sure to be as professional

as they can when it comes to dealing with not only their job of fighting fires but the whole approach to what needs to be done to make sure the supports are there for good fire services in municipalities.

The second reason we've had fairly good fire services in the province is because, more importantly even, to a certain extent, the government of Ontario has assumed its responsibility when it comes to making sure that fire services are delivered in a professional manner within communities and that those fire service departments are supported adequately at the local level by making sure there's legislation in place that sets up what should and shouldn't happen when it comes to fire services.

What we're about to see with the passage of Bill 84 is a devolution of responsibilities on the part of the province of Ontario. The province is saying, "We wash our hands of this responsibility we have." Namely the Solicitor General, the Honourable Bob Runciman, washes their hands of the responsibility they have of making sure certain key aspects are followed when it comes to fire services in the province. That's sad, because up till now we have had fairly good fire services in the province.

I was happy to be a member of the committee that travelled the province over a period of two to three weeks, where we heard submission after submission from people from communities like Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor and various communities in Ontario. Every time they came forward, almost with no exception, we heard people saying a couple of very important things; one was, "My life was saved because the fire department was able to get to the accident" or able to get to the fire within a very short period of time, two to three to five minutes, what is known in the fire services as response time. Because of that, those people were able to come before the committee and say, "Here's how I feel about what this government is doing."

What the government is putting in danger and what the government is doing in setting up this legislation is that they're going to give municipal governments, which are cash strapped because of provincial government downloads, the ability to do a whole bunch of things with fire departments that, in my view, may save them some money but certainly are going to put in jeopardy the quality of services we have in fire departments across the province.

One of the key things they're going to do by way of this legislation is allow the introduction of the use of part-time firefighters. Let's not confuse that with volunteers. Volunteer firefighters and part-time firefighters are totally different issues. The government tries to mix the two of them up by saying, "What do you have against part-time, because we've been using volunteers for years?"

The difference is that in communities like Timmins, Sudbury, Windsor and Toronto, some of the larger communities in the province, we have full-time fire departments where, if the bell rings, you have full-time fire service people there who are able to respond to the fire or the accident within a very short period of time, like I say, three to five minutes.

What the government is proposing is going to allow municipalities, after today, to start laying off over a

period of time or not rehiring as people retire full-time firefighters and replacing them with part-timers. In the community of Timmins, as an example, where you have a fire brigade of six to seven people with the captain, you will, over a period of time, start to lose the full-timers, and you will end up with a fire department that may have a full-time captain and maybe one or two full-time firefighters. If that bell rings, the two of them are going to run to the truck, jump on it and try to race away to the fire, hoping they can call the part-timers in to be able to assist them when they get to the fire.

What happens if they get to the fire with the two firemen and the fire truck and they don't have the part-timers there because the part-timer happens — he or she — to be at their job or maybe they've gone to a baseball game or maybe they went out of town on holidays? They're not going to be able to enter the fire. They will not be able to do their jobs.

One of the reasons we have a high degree of ability to be able to save lives with our fire services in this province is because we've got full-time firefighters who are able to be there in a short period of time and together, as a team, rush into the fire, using all the experience they have and all the training and knowhow they have to be able to get to us, the citizens who are in peril of our lives because of the fire. That's what this government is putting in jeopardy.

The other thing we were told about by people who appeared before our committee was the whole concept of team. This comes back to the issue of bringing in part-time firefighters. You have to understand that not just anybody can run in and try to fight a fire. Firefighting is a very technical, very difficult business to learn. It's not a job you can learn tomorrow, put on a fireman's coat and put on a fireman's hat and all of a sudden you're a firefighter; that's not the way it works. It takes years of training.

These six or seven full-time firefighters who make up the team of the captain down to the person who drives the truck or the person who does the various jobs on the fire truck, when they get to the fire, they work as a team. When they enter a burning building, the person at the front of the line, who may be holding on to the hose and trying to suppress the fire, knows the person behind them is going to be there and do what needs to be done to make sure that the person in the front is able to do his or her job.

One of the things we heard in the committee hearings is that with the introduction of part-timers, you may have a team that comprises two or maybe three full-time firefighters, who know their every move, who know when they get a certain tap on the back or a certain exclamation of the voice it means something, knowing they can rely on the person behind them, to having part-timers around, who may be very well intentioned, who might even be well trained to a certain degree but don't understand how the team concept works and how people get the job done. So the firefighter in there trying to do his or her job may never be sure that the person behind them is able to be relied on for the firefighter's safety. That will cause hesitation, and hesitation will cost lives. We

heard that time and time again when it came to the public hearings.

The other thing Bill 84 is going to do is allow the government of Ontario to devolve its responsibilities through the existing legislation to let municipalities privatize fire service departments in this province. I say to the government, shame on you. I say to the people of Ontario, beware, because this experiment in trying to save dollars by introducing the private sector into fire services has been tried in other jurisdictions, and it doesn't work.

We have to get clear in our minds that yes, the private sector has a responsibility and has a place and does things well, but when it comes to fire services and other services, the government also has a responsibility. The key word is that it is fire "services," and that does not talk about making money; that talks about making sure you have adequate equipment and adequate staff, who are there to be able to answer the call when a fire or accident happens.

This government is introducing the concept of privatization, which I will not get into a lot of detail on because I know Floyd Laughren, the member for Nickel Belt, will talk on that issue as the critic for privatization. On that point, I only want to say this: The government is going down a road that, in my view, is very dangerous. I don't want to have to rely on a privatized fire department to come and fight the fire in my house if it's burning, because I don't want to have to worry about, "Excuse me, sir, will that be cash or Chargex?" when the fire starts. That's not what this is all about.

I want to know that in the end they will come and they will fight the fire and they will do what they have to do. I want to make sure that the men and women who are the firefighters are professionals who have been adequately trained, who have been properly supported and have sufficient resources to arrive at the scene of the fire or the accident and make sure the job is done. With privatization, don't believe me; look at the reports, look at what happened in other jurisdictions where this has been attempted and it has failed.

In the few minutes I have left, I want to say one other thing, because I would be remiss in not saying it. We thought as committee members — my colleague Mr Kormos, the member for Welland-Thorold, and myself, and firefighters across this province — that we were finally starting to get some of the government members to listen to what was being said, not by me, not by Gilles Bisson, the New Democratic member for Cochrane South, or Peter Kormos, the member for Welland-Thorold, but we thought they were finally starting to listen to the firefighters who were presenting to the committee, to the average citizens who came before us, the apartment building owners, the small business owners, all of whom came to us — it was quite interesting — from different walks of life, from different political stripes, who said privatization and a whole bunch of other initiatives were bad, but especially privatization.

1650

We were finally starting to believe there were at least two government members on the committee who were prepared to listen and maybe even take some action. One was the parliamentary assistant, Mr Carr, and the other

one was the member, Mr Ron Johnson. I forget his riding. I wish I didn't, because I shouldn't refer to him only by name.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): Brantford.

Mr Bisson: Brantford. We finally thought there were two members who were listening, who were hearing the arguments. I wasn't convinced that they were going to vote on any every amendment that we put forward, but I thought there was some progress being made. I thought finally, after being beat up on Bill 103, after being beat up on Bill 26 and a whole bunch of other issues, these two particular members were starting to say: "Hey, Mike, maybe not. Maybe this is a problem, Mike." "Excuse me, Mike. Maybe we're doing the wrong thing." "Mike, can we amend this legislation, Mr Premier?" I remember the night we got into Windsor talking to my colleague Mr Kormos and saying, "I think we've got some movement from Mr Johnson and Mr Carr on a couple of issues."

We come to committee the next morning and do you know what we find out? The Premier, Mike Harris, the member for Nipissing, fired both the committee members. Fired the committee members for what? For having done their jobs, for listening to the people of Ontario, for standing up for firefighters and other citizens and actually saying on committee that the government, when it came to certain aspects of this bill, had it wrong. I finally thought we were getting somewhere until that Thursday morning when I found out that the Premier said: "No, I don't want any of my caucus members to listen to the public. I don't want any of my Conservative members to listen to what people are saying. I only want them to listen to what I have to say," and the unpaid minions in the Office of the Premier who make all the decisions in this place and basically are above the responsibility of having to listen to anybody. But the point I'm making is the government, the Premier, fired those two particular members off the committee.

I say, in closing, shame on the Premier, shame on him and the Solicitor General, Mr Runciman, for having introduced such legislation, shame on them for putting in jeopardy the lives of the citizens of Ontario on the basis of what this legislation will do to fire services in the long run, and especially, shame on the Premier of Ontario who in opposition said, "I will make sure that I give my members the freedom to respect their constituents and act according to their wishes," to where if you disagree with Mike Harris and you're a member of his caucus, he not only won't put you in cabinet, he'll fire you out of your position in order to keep you quiet and not criticizing the government. To that I say shame.

I end on that point, only to say I urge all members of the House to vote against this legislation and stand up for the people of this province, the people they were elected to come here and represent.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I want to take this opportunity first to commend the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, especially Bruce Carpenter, the president. What he has done is educated us, informed us very well. I presume that when they started this Bill 84 — and today we are much more informed, especially the politicians. The parliamentarians

somehow were not as informed to know the kind of tremendous work that these folks were doing saving lives all the time. I found that the hearings were extremely useful for us and for the public to hear. I know there is another group too. I think I did mention the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. There was another one.

Hon Mr Jackson: Jim Lee and Bruce Carpenter, both really terrific guys.

Mr Curling: Yes. I want to take a few minutes just to say this. These individuals I have come to respect tremendously. We have seen that this government, when we saw 200,000 petitions put before them, guiding them in the sense that they are going in the wrong direction somehow, did not listen at all. My feeling is that democracy is being hijacked again by this government. Of course, members have mentioned those in their caucus who tried somehow to come to some reasoning thoughts of what the professional firefighters were saying. What happened? They were thrown out of caucus. That's awful.

One of the things that concerned me very much is how this government decided now to strip them of the right to strike. That doesn't bother me too much, but why is it we have to try to be picking fights with these individuals? Firefighters never strike. I have never heard of a strike at all in which firefighters are out there striking. They have gone out in a professional way, they have done their job, they have saved lives each day, and sometimes we take it for granted. But somehow this government has some sort of vendetta for any kind of unions or so on to say they cannot strike. I think they're picking a fight. It's unfortunate. The bullying strategy of this government is becoming annoying, and I tell you that the people can't wait to put some sense into them.

The other area I want to touch on very quickly is about the privatization. I heard the minister say that's not going to happen, but we know that's the road on which they're going to go. As soon as they pass it on to the municipalities, the municipalities may say, "We have no other way to go but to privatize that." I think that's very, very sad.

One of the members showed me his Visa card and said: "That's what's going to happen these days. In order to get a fire put out, you have to have money." So those who are going to be protected, those whose lives are going to be saved — it depends on a Visa card, it depends on money. Privatization is leading to that end. I have seen that everything this government is doing somehow leads to that, that the private sector can do it better — bottom line, profit, nothing about human beings at all, because to them it costs too much money. As far as this government is concerned, this province could have run much better without people, much better. As a matter of fact, it would run much more efficiently with money. Forget the people. I am perturbed that the direction in which they are going is going to be very harmful. Worse than that, I think it's going to cost lives. The warning of thousands of people across the province is saying: "It's the wrong way to go. Why are we rushing this?"

One of the best lines, which I would have given the Premier an Academy Award for, is when he got up the other day and said, "We are not in the process of ramming things through." Can you imagine that? "We don't

ram things through." I presume we'll just be a dictatorship and just do it.

These things have to have sober thought, how we change legislation and how we go about making the laws represent the people in the way that reflects their needs and that somehow they feel a part of the process.

I would like very much to appeal to those members on the government side who I know want so much to think on their own without getting words from the back room of cabinet on what to say, to know in their hearts that they can vote specifically the way they think is right. Again, they are restricted and they may not be able to do so. But the people you represent would understand that representation is about what they want, not what the spin doctors and the bunch of cabinet inner-circle people tell you to do. They would like to see a policy of legislation that reflects them, not a private sector group who are going to dictate it on the bottom line of money. Somehow we will then be able to say we live in a province that will give to the people the laws they deserve and not what the government itself thinks the people deserve.

I just want to make those comments and to say to the firefighters that the fight is not over yet, and we will continue to fight this government to make sure that we are not in any way ignoring their plea.

1700

Mr Laughren: I appreciate the opportunity to get involved in this debate on Bill 84, which is going to have such a profound impact on firefighters and firefighting services in this province.

I was leafing through the firefighters magazine called *Intrepid*, which is put out by the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, and on the cover are pictures of some firepersons talking to one another. One says to another, as they are at a fire: "You'd better do this rescue yourself! I'm a Premier Harris part-time firefighter. My other job means more to me and is not as dangerous." Another firefighter says, "The Premier Harris privatization concept will drastically reduce our staff to the point where we will not be able to do the job efficiently and safely." Another firefighter says, "I thought Premier Harris promised consultations and costings on the fire department act before the elections?" His buddy says: "We never had them. He broke his promise. That's why we'll have these problems and many others!"

These are the firefighters themselves speaking. This is not the opposition speaking in a partisan way; these are the firefighters. This is what they think about this bill. Who better knows the dangers than the people on the front lines? In this case, the people on the front lines are the firefighters themselves.

There is a disturbing pattern developing in legislation that this government brings forward. I served on a committee that dealt with the whole issue of the transfer of water and sewer systems to the municipalities, and deputation after deputation came before the committee and said, "We don't like this bill because it opens the door and accommodates privatization of the water system." The parliamentary assistant and the Minister of Environment said: "Oh no, don't be silly. All it does is transfer the services to the municipality." But no one is fooled by that, absolutely no one. Everyone knows that

with the downloading that's going to be going on, the municipalities will be looking under every stone, in every nook and cranny, to find where they can save a buck.

If they can do that through selling their sewer and water services or through part-time firefighters or privatizing the firefighting system, they will do it and they will feel they have no choice. It's not because they're unhappy with the quality of firefighting service that occurs now in the local municipality and it's not because they're unhappy with the firefighters themselves. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If you were to take a poll out there in the province and list the professions, including politicians, lawyers, teachers, policemen, I ask you, would you find anyone who would be higher on the list than our firefighters in this province? I don't think you'd find anyone higher on the list of public esteem than our firefighters, because people know what they go through, know the risks they take.

For the government to be moving in this direction, which is clearly going to accommodate the privatization, and not, quite frankly, in a very honest and courageous way — I would have more respect for this government if they said, "We are going to do this in order to accommodate privatization." No, they don't have the courage to do that. They simply transfer the authority to the municipality and then tighten the screws on the municipality to the point where they'll have no choice as to what the solution is. That's the problem and that's why there's an anger settling in out there at the way the government is doing this. They're not being honest with the people of this province, either on the previous bill I mentioned dealing with sewer and water or on this bill dealing with firefighting services.

I say to the government members, you can go back to your riding today and tomorrow and next week and say how this bill has got nothing to do with privatization, but when it occurs in a municipality you represent, when it is privatized in your municipality, what are you going to say to your constituents? What are you going to say then? That you were only kidding when you said it wouldn't happen? Is that what you're going to tell them?

Are you going to tell them: "Don't blame me. It's the municipality that has decided to privatize. It's the municipality that has decided to go to part-time firefighters"? You can say that if you like, but do you really think your constituents are going to swallow that? They will know. They know who has made this not only possible but at the end of the day inevitable, and that is what bothers so many of us so much.

I say to the government members I would encourage you to read this magazine called *Intrepid*. There's a very nice summary which gives the reasons they are opposed to this bill.

"Provide fewer firefighters for emergencies.

"Use part-time firefighters with less experience.

"Privatize all, or parts of, the fire service.

"Expand fire bureaucracy.

"Jeopardize teamwork in an emergency."

That really does sum up the concerns of the firefighters and those of us in opposition.

Who would have thought that this bill would become a big issue in this Legislature? When I first saw the bill, I didn't think it would. It wasn't until people started looking behind the scenes of this bill and seeing what it could lead to that people started getting upset. That's why when the committee held hearings the parliamentary assistant and the other members on the committee were very concerned about what was happening. They saw that everything wasn't the way it appeared to be and that at the end of the day there could be a lot of unhappy people as the result of this bill.

It's very unfortunate. I don't believe for a minute that the Solicitor General fired his parliamentary assistant. That's not the prerogative of the minister; that's the prerogative of the Premier. I'm not even convinced, and I would never expect him to say anything like this, that the Solicitor General is very supportive of this bill, because if anybody fancied himself as a friend of policemen and firemen, it was the Solicitor General, Mr Runciman.

Suddenly a great divide has been created between him and the firefighters of this province. I don't think that must make him very comfortable; it must make him very uncomfortable. I suspect that if he could turn back the clock or make the changes that could and should be made, he would do it. But I think the orders have come down from on high: "This is the way this bill is written and this is the way this bill is going to be passed."

I go back to the sewer and water bill: same thing there. Deputation after deputation said, "Make these changes." All that was required was an amendment that said, "No municipality may privatize its sewer and water services." There could be an amendment in this bill that says, "No municipality can privatize its firefighting services." As I say that, in walks the minister for privatization, Mr Sampson, who so far has got nothing to do except privatize three trees; I mean, three tree nurseries.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): More than three trees.

Mr Laughren: More than three trees. I know he may have a longer list that he has shared with some but not with me.

In order to allow more time for other members, I shall conclude my remarks.

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'm very happy to address this bill. I'll be very happy to not be voting in favour of Bill 84.

A little bit of history: When we became aware of some of the negative aspects of Bill 84, what I did find was that the people in Windsor and LaSalle, where I come from, had very strong opinions about what was wrong with Bill 84. In the length of time I've known some of the firefighters in the riding I come from I can tell you this is one group that you simply cannot put down as just another special interest group. In fact the government has a responsibility to listen to them carefully, and so far the government has done everything but.

Today in question period the minister said, "We have listened." Every firefighter who was in the gallery today and who may be watching today anywhere in Ontario knows that in fact is not the case. The presidents of the firefighting associations who have been working and

trying to work with the Solicitor General know that is simply not the case. It's quite one thing to hear what the firefighters have to say and it's quite another to listen to what they say and then take action accordingly.

1710

In this brief time I have I'd like to speak to the issue of privatization. I think it is one of the more serious elements of the bill. The Solicitor General believes that it will now be left to municipalities to determine appropriate levels of firefighting. I'd like to mention briefly the Knoxville model, which we have done our part to make sure Ontarians are aware of. I'd also like to mention the California experience, insurance rates, who does support Bill 84 and why, some of the comments from the submissions we heard in Windsor when the hearings travelled there and finish by telling you a little bit about what the Windsor and LaSalle firefighters are known for where I come from.

The government has put the bill over as just one little bill, like it's no big deal. What we have found is that for the first time in history firefighters, masses of them, found themselves congregating at Queen's Park. I won't forget the day that Premier Harris went out on the steps of the Legislature to announce for the third time a breakfast program, and as those big transport trucks pulled away, there was a sea of black coats, firefighters from across Ontario who came at that point to try to stop the Solicitor General. That was after the bill had simply been introduced and we hadn't gone to hearings. Today they are more frustrated with the government than ever because they insist on standing up in the House as though they have actually done something. In fact, they have not.

It was a particularly frustrating experience to listen to committee members when they were in Windsor, government members who just didn't have the nerve to stand up and say: "Yes, this is what we're doing. Yes, Bill 84 is a tool that municipalities need because we are cutting transfer payments to cities and towns across Ontario. Because we're making such dramatic cuts, we need to give cities and towns the tools to privatize because that is the only way they'll be able to have some kind of level of fire protection in Ontario."

Say it like it is. If there's anything that has been more frustrating for us on this side of the House, it's that government members cannot simply stand up and say that is what they're doing. They find every manner of getting around that argument by putting up some element of Bill 84 which in fact has full agreement, that is a long time coming in terms of change; no one would argue. It's much like the Red Tape Review Commission. In every example given, you'll find some arcane law that should be amended. With Bill 84 there are elements that could and should be changed. Everyone would agree with those. But the government has to stop and say, "What have we got in the bill that's bad?" and there are several items.

In the area of privatization there was the discussion of whether the bill allows for privatization. A memo that was put forward by the counsel of the Ministry of the Solicitor General said, "It is well established that a municipality has an implied power to enter into agreements as a body corporate in order to carry out its business," and it does so in various areas like garbage

collection. I would submit to the Solicitor General that garbage collection can hardly be compared to firefighting services in terms of its being an emergency service available to all residents in Ontario.

It is hardly an argument, however, that you would say, "Well, they've had the power to privatize, so it's no big deal." The minister has yet to stand up in the House and say, "I don't believe in privatizing firefighting services." He has waffled and said any manner of things but has not said, "I don't agree that firefighting should be privatized." Moreover, the fire chiefs' association and its president have not been on record to say, "I don't believe we should be privatizing firefighting service." That is the kind of thing that I expect to hear from the president of the fire chiefs' association for Ontario.

The Knoxville model: We showed our local community the Knoxville model of privatization. May I tell you that the mouths were agape when they saw what Rural/Metro has done in the state of Tennessee. There were errors in judgement and simply a lack of service provision for one reason: They didn't have the resources. The president of Rural/Metro is on record in that state as saying, "We are doing the best we can with the resources that we are being provided," and that is the case. Such dramatic cuts to municipalities will make cities and towns in Ontario look at that as well. That has happened in Port Colborne already. Rural/Metro already went to the council of Port Colborne and said, "Let us come in and provide your firefighting service." They've already asked for it. With quite good judgement it was tossed out of the room immediately. Regardless, the request is there. The more the municipalities are squeezed and the more you cut transfer payments to cities and towns, they will look for any method at all to find savings in services their public expects them to provide.

I called the fire chief in Knoxville. I had him on the phone personally and I said, "Tell me what you think of privatizing." He summarized this with one clear statement: "When you privatize, you lose quality of service." That is a direct quote from an individual with years and years of experience in fire service delivery and certainly with nothing to gain in Ontario. That is a direct quote from people who have been used to this.

May I tell you that in 1976 in California Proposition 13 was passed? What that did in the state of California was limit the allowability of the state to increase taxes unless they call for a referendum and allow the people to raise taxes. Of course the people always say no. The direct result of the passage of Proposition 13 through referenda in the state of California was that cities and towns started pulling funding away from their firefighting services. As a result of that, within a mere two years the state of California had to pass yet another bill and that bill was to protect the funding to firefighters.

Why would you not look to examples in North America, where clearly errors have been made in their past, yet you insist on walking down the same path? I might remind this House that we are still very worried that you are about to bring in legislation for referenda. We will fight you on that one as well because we know what it means. It is a tool for you to get your hands on more and more power and make excuses for the cutting

of services and the cutting of transfer payments that don't allow other levels of government to provide the services well.

We have looked at a number of areas of privatization and found several of them that simply have been ignored. We cannot deny that we now in this province do allow for the privatization of the fire departments across cities and towns. Why would the Solicitor General allow that? Why would he not say straight out in the bill, "You cannot privatize"? He hasn't done so.

Various areas: The powers of entry. When firefighters go to homes to fight fires, they have automatic powers to enter. That then would have to be granted to private companies, and personally I have some trouble with that. Private corporations would have a conflict of interest, a serious one, in the branch of private fire service in the areas of construction, development or supply of materials while at the same time trying to enforce codes related to buildings. If private companies, for example, are also in the business of furnishing fire departments with supplies, there's an automatic conflict of interest.

Private fire agencies have a significantly higher insurance rating. In every area that has private fire delivery, those homes and property taxpayers pay more in insurance rates than anywhere else. In fact, where it's been privatized, they've also introduced user fees. Regardless of whether or not the home burns to the ground, those user fees are charged. Rural/Metro has been taken to court more than once because people have refused to pay because Rural/Metro, the private company, didn't show up with enough water; they showed up with equipment that didn't work; they showed up with not enough firefighters to service the fire. As we heard in the House today from our critic, Mr Ramsay from Timiskaming, we know what's critical is the first few moments of fire and that within minutes it doubles and doubles in size, so you would think we would want some kind of protection for that. In fact, there's none here.

The minister said today in the House that he really can trust that municipalities will take seriously their role in providing adequate levels. Let me tell you that this morning on the radio station in Windsor Mayor Mike Hurst is on record as saying, "As long as I'm the mayor, we will never privatize fire service in Windsor." That's fabulous. We're also heading into a municipal election. Whether he will be re-elected is not the issue. The point is, what they happen to think will depend on whether the fire service is protected, not because there's legislation in Ontario that wouldn't allow it.

1720

Let's look at the Sarnia model. Let's look at the paper that appeared, front page, in Sarnia: "Flip-flop on Fire Protection." What they did there, after agreeing to hire 24 firefighters two weeks ago — that was two weeks ago as of April 15 — the councillors changed their minds. By keeping five fire stations open, they recognized that they would have to hire more firefighters, so what they decided to do, a gross embarrassment — "City Council's Actions an Embarrassment," is how the editorial ran in Sarnia — is to wait until after the passage of Bill 84, because inherent in Bill 84 is that it allows the towns and municipalities to bring in part-time firefighters. They

figure in Sarnia, "We'll be able to keep all five fire stations open and we'll put part-timers in there."

Is that such a bad thing? Well, people who have had years of experience in fighting fires say, "Bill 84 goes even further to make changes that allow fire chiefs to maintain a skeleton crew of firefighters on duty and give them the power to order in firefighters who are off-duty." This was prepared for us by Jack Fenton, the president of the firefighters in Windsor. Having one firefighter responding with the engine and being able to do nothing at a fire until others arrive actually would be allowable under Ontario law. I cannot imagine that the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs would allow something like this to stand as good law for Ontario and that they wouldn't have taken a further stand on that issue.

I come to who supports Bill 84. Certainly the fire chiefs' association is on record as saying they do that. In fact, they are not representative of all the fire chiefs in Ontario. The fire chief in Windsor, Dave Fields, is on record as saying no. He said, "Yes, there are parts of Bill 84 that are good and we have to support that, but it is the role of the Ontario fire chiefs association to look at the whole bill and not simply be sold off" — for what, we know not yet, but they have actually stood and allowed things.

This president in particular, Mr Tulk, has written to Dave Fields, the chief in Windsor, and said, "I personally, and on a professional level, share many of your views on part IX," which is the labour clause; "however, the board of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs made a conscious decision to follow the mandate set out by its members in public safety and let the firefighter associations represent the labour-related concerns." That is a sellout.

May I be quite clear: It is the responsibility of anyone who is involved in firefighting to stand up for what they know is right. I expect associations to come out and say that if you're truly concerned with fire safety in Ontario, you would not allow for the privatization in any municipality. Even when the powers were given to all the cities and towns through Bill 26, that wasn't the point, but when this government put the screws to the transfer payments to cities and towns across Ontario, now they're in the position to have to look to cut firefighting services.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Order. I would just like to remind the people in the gallery that you're not allowed to demonstrate in any form.

Mrs Pupatello: I expect to get a rise out of that, and I'm certainly not necessarily here to make friends with fire chiefs across Ontario. But we have an obligation to tell the truth. I need an explanation about why firefighting chiefs would not be on record as saying, "I am opposed to privatization." Given the record in the American states, given the litany of insurance claims, given the litigation that has followed in states, how can we not wholeheartedly stand up and say "I oppose privatization"? So push that aside.

I am interested in what the residents of Windsor and Essex county have to say about privatization. They don't agree. We met several individuals who came, people who personally experienced the firefighting services in

Ontario. One was a gentleman named Joe Egan. "I am a retired electrical contractor from Sarnia, and I am frightened." Here is a gentleman who lost his 25-year-old daughter in a house fire and went on to do several things to promote smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are not in Bill 84. Apparently, it's coming in the fire code, but I don't believe you. I don't trust that that is the case.

His concerns, though, have caused him to become very involved in firefighting services and what is appropriate as a level. This is not a special interest group; this is a man who lost a child to fire and has taken much time and energy since then to see that it's being put right in Ontario. He says: "The passage of Bill 84 won't permit them to properly man the stations by the use of part-time people. This can only put the firemen and the public at grave risk for the sake of a few dollars."

We talk about the safety of the public. Who is talking about the safety of the firefighters? When the firefighters go in to fight a fire, it is well known that they have a team attitude, that everything firefighters do they do as a team. Are the firefighters as safe going to fight fires when they are operating some as full-time and some as part-time? This has been researched to death. This is not new. But to have the government come in today and wholeheartedly upset the applecart, needlessly I might say, and then have the gall not to stand up and say they're doing it is unconscionable and not acceptable to most people in the province.

Might I tell you that the people of Windsor and LaSalle have come to know firefighters in other than their role. They have done more for community service in Windsor and Essex county than, thankfully, having to fight fires. That's because they do their volunteer work in our community and they do it voluntarily. They do it voluntarily because they truly have an attitude that is public-spirited.

They know that the chief is on their side, they know that city hall is on their side, so after their shifts are over they spend hours and hours carting out the safety village so they can run kids through the safety house and teach them about a home that's burning. They do it of their own free will and time. When Tim from the fire department called me, while I was still at Rotary, and said, "We're looking for sponsorships to bring this house to Windsor," he had no problem. People couldn't rush fast enough to give him donations because we knew the good work the department was doing.

It's that kind of public spirit that, in my view, this government has deliberately set out to ruin, and we don't understand why. We think it's needless. They went out of their way to put a strike clause in Bill 84, which was completely unnecessary. If you knew that every association of firefighters, since the beginning of time, has had within their own mandate that they will never strike, why would you put that in the bill other than to irritate them, other than to cause dissension among the ranks and set one against the other? It's completely unnecessary, and you've done it particularly to poke the bear. Why? To show you can poke the bear? So you can just show the power you have in being government? Let me tell you, you need to be far more responsible than that.

We know that today in the House Bill 84 is probably going to pass. May I tell you that there are individuals in Ontario in whom I am very disappointed, who should have stood up against Bill 84 and did not. But I am more disappointed with the Solicitor General, the Premier's office, who was begged to make certain amendments to this bill and didn't, who was begged probably by his own caucus members at some point, and they still didn't listen.

The Solicitor General standing up in the House today and saying, "We listened to the people," galls me and anyone else who has been following this debate, because we know you haven't listened. You are also prepared to put people's lives at stake for the sake of power, and that, government, is not acceptable.

1730

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I'm going to be brief in my comments because many members of my caucus have already had a chance to put on the record what we find so offensive and so objectionable about this piece of legislation. But I couldn't allow this to pass without getting in some comments of my own.

I'm going to start with three comments that came from government backbenchers. The first comment is from Toni Skarica, MPP, and it says —

The Deputy Speaker: Which riding is he from?

Mr Hampton: Mr Skarica, I believe, is from Wentworth. His comment is, "There is something wrong when the Premier and a couple of unelected staff people can run the entire province." Then he says, "It's a dictatorship."

The second comment was from the person who used to be the parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General until this bill came along, and in the middle of this bill he was removed. That is of course Gary Carr, the member for Oakville South. Mr Carr's comments are, "Mike Harris has got to realize this is still a democracy, not a dictatorship."

At the outset someone might wonder, what do these comments have to do with this legislation? They have a lot to do with it, an awful lot. We know that while these hearings were being conducted, people like Mr Carr and some of the Conservative backbenchers were persuaded by the case that was made day in and day out in communities across this province; were persuaded by the case that was made by firefighters; persuaded by the case that was made by people who had been victims of fires and whose property and lives had been saved by firefighters. They were persuaded by insurance agents who came in and talked about the need for rapid response, who talked about the need for having very well-trained firefighters, firefighters who worked as a team, who understood each other almost intuitively and therefore would make the right reaction in very stressful circumstances. Members of the government's own committee, government members of the committee, were being persuaded.

We know, for example, that they raised very eloquent arguments within their caucus as to why and how the government ought to pay attention to this, but they were simply told: "Shut up, and if you're not prepared to shut up, you'll be shuffled out of your position as Mr Carr was. Do whatever the Premier's office says."

You see, what happened during those hearings was this: Members of the government, MPP backbenchers in the government started to understand that this bill, Bill 84, as it is presently put together, is not so much about firefighting, it's not about that, it's about trying to find ways to take money, to take financial resources out of firefighting. They started to understand that. Yes, there's some window dressing around the side that the government tries to spin every day, "Oh, this will result in more education and this will result in better fire prevention," there are some spin words around the edges about that, but the guts of this legislation are about how you take money, how you take financial resources out of fire services, out of fire protection services, out of public safety; how you take that out and put it in a pot to deal with the Premier's real agenda.

We know from sitting in here day after day what the Premier's real agenda is. There's no money for children, but there's money to finance a \$5-billion tax scheme for the government's wealthy friends. There's less money for firefighting and for fire protection but there's going to be more money to finance a \$5-billion tax scheme for this government's wealthy friends. There's money being taken out of health care. You have to shut down 30 hospitals and cut the budgets of other hospitals by \$1.3 billion over three years so you can put the money in a pot to finance this \$5-billion tax scheme for the government's wealthy friends.

Government members who went out and heard what's happening out there in terms of fire services and got the lowdown on what the privatization of fire services means, got the lowdown on what part-time firefighting services mean, started to understand the picture. They started to come back and say, "We shouldn't do this."

Good fire protection services should continue to be a priority in Ontario communities. We should not pass legislation which facilitates the downgrading of fire protection services. We should not try to force through legislation which takes money and financial resources and training and emphasis out of fire protection services.

We know they went back to their caucus and we know the message they got was this kind of message: "Get in line, shut up, obey the Premier's office or get the boot." So they responded. They responded, as I think good MPPs would, by saying: "This is not a dictatorship. This should not be a dictatorship. There's something wrong when the Premier and a couple of unelected staff people can run the entire province and can give marching orders to the entire province." That's what that has to do with this legislation.

What's going to happen here today, very shortly, when a vote on this is forced by the government? The government will march in their trained seals, their clones, and everyone will be told: "Stand and vote for this legislation. Ignore the potential destructiveness of this legislation. Ignore the fact that it is going to take away from public safety. Ignore the fact that it's going to undermine some aspects of health and safety and the proper operation that firefighters have built up over 40 or 50 years in this province. Just ignore that. We've got to get the money for this tax scheme and some of it's got to come out of here; some of it's got to come out of firefighting."

It's true municipalities will be handed the dirty work. They'll be handed the dirty work of saying to firefighting departments, "We're going to take this amount of money out of your budget," and the response will come back, "Well, if you're going to take this, we've got to find some way of stringing things together." They will then use combinations of privatization, part-timers, whatever to string together something that's supposed to look like adequate fire protection but in reality will be a lot less than communities have been accustomed to in the past.

That's the scheme here, so let's make it plain so that everyone can know it. This government has money to give to their wealthy friends on Bay Street. They are the people who are going to benefit the most from this government's tax scheme. People whose incomes are over \$100,000 or \$200,000 a year will get a sizeable gift each and every year from this government. Communities are going to pay for it through the loss of quality fire protection services, the loss of quality health care, the loss of quality education services, the loss of community supports for children and other people who are vulnerable. That's what this is all about. This government doesn't have an agenda for fire protection; it has an agenda for giving to its wealthy friends more and more of Ontario's resources and taking those resources from services like this: fire protection.

We heard over and over again from people who came before the committee that they're opposed to this. A quarter of a million people went to work and took the time to sign petitions that were presented here today. A quarter of a million people are absolutely opposed to what this government is doing to fire protection and to the public's health and safety. They're opposed to it.

It doesn't matter. This government has its narrow agenda for its wealthy friends and what a quarter of a million people say doesn't matter. Nine thousand firefighters across the province came together to oppose this legislation. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter at all. This government has its narrow agenda: "Get out of the way or we're rolling over you." That's what's happening here.

We also heard when we were out there people who are very knowledgeable about fire protection, people who are very knowledgeable about fire services point out all the inadequacies of what's happened in the United States —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, we're going to oppose this now and we're going to continue to oppose it.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'm very pleased to be able to wrap up the debate on Bill 84 this afternoon and very pleased with the number of members in the House who have been able to speak on this bill. I appreciate the support of all the Liberal members in the House.

I think I'd like to start off by saying how much I've enjoyed working with firefighters right across this province in trying to stop the government from implementing Bill 84. Jim Lee, the president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, and Bruce Carpenter, the president of the Provincial Federation of Ontario Firefighters, are dedicated men to their profession and to the firefighters they represent. They can certainly hold their

heads proudly today with the fight they've made against Bill 84 and some accomplishments they also extracted from this government. I think they should be very proud, and I acknowledge their presence today in the House.

Firefighters are a great bunch of people. It's a wonderful honour and pleasure one has working in this business. With the different assignments one is given over time, we learn so much and we get to meet people in all walks of life. I've really enjoyed working with firefighters and look forward to a continued relationship with the two associations.

1740

It's very important that we be clear about exactly what Bill 84 is. What it is is another bully bill of the Harris government. It's another bully bill that comes from Bill 26, which was, as I call it, the mother of all bully bills, passed by this government last year. While Bill 84 is maybe the son of that bully bill, it is very closely related, because what it does is grant powers to municipalities that, unfortunately, are going to be required because of the extreme financial pressures the Harris government is downloading on our municipalities. That's what a lot of Bill 84 is about.

It's unfortunate that that whole component is in there, because there are some good aspects to Bill 84. All of us in this chamber, including the firefighters here and the present associations, would agree that there are some very positive aspects of this bill, but there are also some areas that are quite dangerous, which I feel, as they do, will put some Ontarians in jeopardy because of the shortcuts that are going to happen in fire safety in this province.

It's very clear that we heard this across the province, as we were able to extract from the government the time we and the firefighters wanted to go across the province and show the government that people in every corner of Ontario were against this bill and support their local firefighters. We started off in Toronto. We went to Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Kingston, Hamilton, Windsor and back to Toronto again. We heard a very good cross-section of Ontarians' views on Bill 84.

Earlier in question period, I talked to the Solicitor General about this bill and basically tried to persuade him one more time to pull this bill. Of course, in his answers he said, "I've made some great changes." Yes, he has made some changes, but there are still three very important parts of this bill that remain that are going to put Ontarians lives in jeopardy. Those three are: the privatization of fire departments, which is, I would say, not just allowed in this enabling legislation but encouraged if you look at the totality of the downloading that is going to occur to the municipalities; the enabling legislation that allows part-time firefighters now, and I'm going to get back to that; and also the callback system that up till now has not been allowed in Ontario.

I think we'd better be clear about privatization. I, like all my colleagues, want to do a better job for government. We understand that it's important that we try to reinvent ourselves. We should try to do a better job in re-engineering government. But that doesn't mean that holus-bolus you've got to privatize everything. In fact, there are certain key parts of government that absolutely should never, ever be privatized. Those areas are those

core functions that involve public safety and security. Therefore, police, corrections and firefighting should never be privatized.

You might ask the reason for that. The reason is that a private company's mandate is to do well for itself and its shareholders, as a private company should. That should be part of the private sector and not part of the public sector. A publicly run, municipally run, fire department is there to do the public good. The firefighters, the chiefs and the whole staff there are dedicated to the public good. That's the prime difference.

When you talk about firefighting, there are many examples of how privatization has gone completely off the rails. We've heard many references to those in the House today. Those are in the United States, primarily in Arizona, where we had those examples.

But it's interesting, as this bill now is starting to become known in Ontario, the reaction of many of the Ontario fire chiefs, firefighters and other organizations. John Dietrich, a firefighter in Waterloo, said that the only way a private fire company could make a profit in Ontario would be to reduce the level of fire service which our communities expect. I certainly agree with that and hope that doesn't happen.

We even have the fire chief of Toronto against Bill 84, saying that there are some real inherent dangers in this bill. He goes on to say, "Considering that the proposed legislation opens the door to part-time firefighters and contemplates the contracting out of full-time municipal fire departments, clearly defined standards for fire protection, training and certification should be included in the legislation to guarantee the safety of professional firefighters and to ensure that a serious threat to public safety will never exist." That has not been done and is not included in Bill 84.

The fire chief of Windsor shares the very same view. I know the member for Windsor-Sandwich had quoted great parts of the presentation he made along with the deputy chief when we were down in Windsor, in the justice committee hearings down there. He is very much opposed to the privatization of firefighting and understands that in order to make a profit, privatized fire departments are going to have to cut corners, and cutting corners in that type of service is going to put lives in jeopardy.

This privatization is interesting. One of the chiefs who came before us from Phoenix, Arizona, has experience in that state with the Rural/Metro privatization. He said: "In all our zeal to reinvent government, what department or agency of government really works in a responsive way for people? Why, it's the fire department. What other government office can you call and a real person picks up the phone? And before they serve you, all they ask you is two questions: Where are you and what's the trouble? And they are immediately on the way."

Within three and four and five and six minutes in most municipalities in Ontario they're on the spot rendering service to all Ontarians. That's what they do and that's a service we shouldn't be tinkering with. There isn't a problem there; it isn't broken and we shouldn't be tinkering with it. I don't know of any other more responsive government office than that, and yet, because of the severe downloading constraints on municipalities by the

Harris government, that is why see Bill 84. A system that works perfectly well is going to be disrupted. We're going to break it, we're going to wreck it because of the Harris tax cut to give the fat cats a lot more money, and that's wrong.

The other area that is of big concern is the use of part-time firefighters. Again, people have to understand how a fire department works and the teamwork that is created among the men and women who work in that fire department. It's very important to understand that when you send men and women into a dangerous situation, they have to know each other, they have to be trained with each other and they have to have faith and trust in the others work.

You know what's very interesting when you send a fire crew into a building? Everybody else is leaving, but the firefighters are going in. They're going in to save people, maybe somebody who couldn't get out, and unfortunately sometimes that happens. So we send people in. They risk their lives on a daily basis for us, to save our lives. I think these people deserve better from us in government.

You don't send in part-time firefighters in a team of firefighters in a dangerous situation. You've got to keep a team intact. Municipalities are going to be scratching their heads now with all this downloading and they're going to say: "We've got this crew sitting there in the firehall and they don't get a call every minute. Maybe we could somehow cut down. We'll just send two firefighters on the initial response. If it's an emergency, maybe we'll bring in a few more people."

That's not good enough. I want to make sure that firehall is fully staffed with people ready to go, and I don't care how long it was before their last fire. I want to make sure that when my family calls, when my colleague's family calls, when you call out there, that fire crew is there, they're rested, trained and ready to go to save those lives. That's the type of fire service we have here in Ontario and this government is trying to wreck it just to save a few cents. That's wrong, that's tragic and it's not the way to go.

The other system they're looking at is called the callback system. This would allow municipalities to understaff firehalls and again this is a big mistake, because when you send an undercrewed team out there and they find they're into something a little larger than they can handle, on this system they're going to have to call back to the fire department to call back to their homes, "We'd better get some more people who are not on duty and bring them to the situation."

If there's anything I've learned in the debate of Bill 84, it's that immediate responsiveness is the primary criterion when it comes to firefighting. As many of the members have mentioned here today, a fire doubles in size every minute, so it is important to get out there at least before four minutes because a fire now is 16 times as large as it was when it started — in four minutes. You've got to get out there with sufficient crew and sufficient equipment, and if you're not there by eight minutes your chances of now putting that fire out greatly diminish, and they greatly diminish every minute after that. So it's very important that you have a well-rested,

trained and coordinated crew ready to respond at a minute's notice and to get out there to save those lives.

It's interesting, when you looked at last night's incident with the French debate in Ottawa, and it's like this in every emergency situation. When you punch in 911 for an emergency and maybe what you really want is an ambulance, who gets there first? It's the fire department, and they've got all the emergency training to handle those medical emergencies on the spot before an ambulance gets there. It's always the fire department that gets there first. So why are we wrecking this service? Why are we doing this to the people of Ontario and jeopardizing people's lives? That's wrong. To save a few bucks? People's lives are worth a lot more than a few bucks and it's wrong to be jeopardizing this. This government should be ashamed of itself for doing this.

The most interesting thing I learned going around in committee hearings was the person-to-person accounts of acts of heroism that we heard in committee. We heard those in Windsor, we heard them in Hamilton, in Kingston, in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, the human stories that sometimes we read about in the newspapers and sometimes we don't, where people got themselves in trouble in whatever different circumstances and the first people to arrive at the scene were firefighters. As I said before, while all of us are leaving the scene of a fire or an accident, it's the firefighters who go into that scene at great risk to their lives to save people. We should be supporting them for that. We should be making sure they've got the very best equipment, the very best of training, that we pay them well and make sure their shifts are appropriate to do the jobs they are required to do.

We've got a very good professional full-time firefighting component in Ontario and we have a very good volunteer component in Ontario. In many small municipalities, that's all they can afford. I want to make it clear that when we differentiate between volunteers and part-timers, what we're talking about is full-time professional fire departments starting to use part-time people.

What is wrong with that is that in a big urban centre you've got to have people who are basically in the zone, who are up to speed every second to be able to get into those emergency situations and react — not somebody who does this while they've got other work going on and they just come in a couple of times a week. That call can come in to the fire department any time, any day or night, and we've got to have full-time people there who are trained and rested, who work as a team and are effective in responding to those situations.

That's the type of team we've built in Ontario and now the Harris government is going to destroy that. I think that's wrong. Those municipalities, when you talk to them, say, "We'd never do this to our fire departments," but I'll tell you, the municipalities are starting to understand the tremendous pressure that's coming down to them from the downloading exercise of the Harris government. I'm afraid, and all my colleagues are afraid, that with the very best of intentions of many of our municipal councillors, what they're going to start to look at in the next couple of years are our firefighting and emergency services. That's where they're going to start to cut.

Yes, they are expensive services, but they're well worth it. That's money well spent. That's why I pay my taxes. I know that money is well spent. It's reinvested in preserving life and property in Ontario. That's a service I'm proud of. We're world-renowned in Ontario for that service. We should be proud of the men and women who put their lives on the line every day for us. This government should be ashamed of what they're doing.

The minister is here today and I would say, as I start to sum up, that he has one more opportunity to say, "I stand this bill down." Let's stand this bill down and rethink this thing before we go ahead. I think that's the right thing to do to make sure that the fire protection we have today in Ontario is preserved and the very best in the world.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Mr Runciman has moved third reading of Bill 84. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1755 to 1800.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	McLean, Allan K.	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Munro, Julia	Tsubouchi, David H.
Doyle, Ed	Newman, Dan	Turnbull, David
Fisher, Barbara	O'Toole, John	Vankoughnet, Bill
Grimmett, Bill	Parker, John L.	Villeneuve, Noble
Harnick, Charles	Pettit, Trevor	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Hastings, John	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Wood, Bob

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Gravelle, Michael	Morin, Gilles E.
Bartolucci, Rick	Hampton, Howard	Patten, Richard
Bisson, Gilles	Hoy, Pat	Pouliot, Gilles
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Laughren, Floyd	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	Silipo, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Wildman, Bud
Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn	Wood, Len
Gerretsen, John	Miclash, Frank	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 32.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 11 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1803.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Johns, Helen	Saunderson, William
Beaubien, Marcel	Johnson, David	Shea, Derwyn
Boushy, Dave	Kells, Morley	Sheehan, Frank
Brown, Jim	Leach, Al	Smith, Bruce
Carroll, Jack	Leadston, Gary L.	Spina, Joseph

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Jeudi 15 mai 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 15 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 15 mai 1997

*The House met at 1101.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I am pleased to move private member's notice of motion number 53:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should implement a permanent, equitable, patient-based health care funding formula, thereby ensuring that high-growth GTA/905 regions such as Peel, Halton, York and Durham, where demand for health care services is expected to increase by 26.5% from 1995 to 2003, receive a more equitable share of available health care dollars.

As is tradition in the Legislature, private members' business is a time to speak to an issue or a concern to the community that one represents. I've chosen to bring forward a resolution that's important not just to the high-growth areas like the city of Brampton and the region of Peel, but particularly across Ontario.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I wish I had noticed before we started. There is not a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Clerk, is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Mr Spina.

Mr Spina: Thank you, Speaker. Has the time returned to the clock? I think we lost about a minute there.

That important issue is, how do we as a government fund health care and other services so communities with substantial high growth are able to meet the unprecedented need and demand for services? The best way I feel this can be accomplished is through developing a permanent, patient-based funding formula.

What I'm not trying to do here is say that one area of the province is more important than another. My travels to northern and rural Ontario municipalities prove that each region has different needs that must be met in the most effective and efficient way possible, and any area experiencing significant growth or not would be served by this type of funding formula. The city I represent has a big problem trying to match continued growth with services, and the best way to help alleviate this problem would be a patient-based funding formula.

I want to begin by providing members of the Legislature with some background on the issue and why it's important to my riding but also some of the other areas. This is not a new issue to Brampton or to the region of Peel, Durham and York, particularly because of the unprecedented growth that this area has experienced in the province and in fact anywhere in Canada.

During the 1995 campaign, I heard a lot about what we called a fair share of funding for services. In fact there's an organization called the Fair Share for Peel Task Force, chaired by Hal Brooks. There is also a GTA/905 Health Care Alliance, with Jim Armstrong, some of the members of which are here in the gallery today.

These people are very hardworking individuals who are striving to overcome the historical underfunding of these areas. The historical underfunding has finally reached its peak. We must now help finish the plan to help ease the burden on services in these communities.

For over a decade, growth in places like Brampton has continued beyond the provincial average while the proportional share of provincial dollars — not just provincially but also federally — the \$2.1-billion cut we've got in health care from the federal government is something we have had a lot of difficulty trying to come to address.

From about 1990 to 1995 the growth in the 905 region, in Brampton in particular, has been at a rate of 16%. By 2003, it would be an additional 26.5%. Overall, the GTA/905 population is expected to reach about 4.5 million in about five years' time. One glaring example of the historical inequity is the amount of money spent per capita on hospital funding — and I'm sure that other areas of Ontario will also have comparative figures — but the per capita funding is about \$400 in the GTA/905, while the provincial average is about \$700 per capita. Cities like Toronto are about \$1,000 per capita.

There are various reasons for them being higher or lower, but if we want to better integrate the health care system, a more equitable way of distributing funds has to be established. What I'm asking here today is that a continuation of the current program that the Ministry of Health has begun be completed and that the plan go all the way so that a proper, patient-based funding formula be developed, so that any high-growth area can receive its fair share of funding dollars.

There are jurisdictions in Canada with population-based funding, like Alberta and BC. For example, in Alberta 20% is added to the per-person funding for remote, rural communities to provide for a full range of basic services. It's not just a straightforward, simple, patient-based funding formula, but it also has to have flexibility to address the needs of rural and other communities across the province, where there is not growth but there are other specific needs. Recent trends show

that this type of funding better supports the creation of an integrated health care system that our government is developing.

Our government has clearly shown leadership in restructuring this system to better meet the needs of patients. Despite the \$2.1-billion cut from the federal government mentioned earlier, we've managed to make about \$900 million in reinvestments to date. We've not only sealed the health care envelope at \$17.4 billion from the 1994 level, but as a result of this past budget, increased it to \$18.5 billion.

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Further, Jim Wilson, our minister, has helped growth areas with revisions to the funding formula. He has instructed the joint policy and planning committee of the Ontario Hospital Association and the ministry to alter the formula so that growth funding is available for hospitals in our areas. The creation of the high-growth fund has reinvested over \$6.6 million over the past two years in my own local hospital, Peel Memorial in Brampton, and made about \$25 million available in each of the last two years to help some of the other 905 area hospitals.

In Burlington, Joseph Brant hospital faced a similar problem. Key reinvestments have been made there: \$1.5 million from the high-growth fund this year, increased to \$2.4 million. Overall the hospital only had to find efficiencies of \$1.3 million, which isn't easy, we respect that, but we also look at the reinvestments made in the MRI machine, mental health programs, community-based care in Halton and Peel region. As a matter of fact, as we speak this morning, Minister Wilson and Minister Jackson are in Peel making an announcement for community health care integrated programs in the Peel region.

Two studies specifically allude to the problem. The Angus Reid study was the first one that said 68% said the Harris government was on track in reforming health care and 58% said the government should use available funding. The Fraser Institute study, which was the second one, said that people living outside of Toronto are waiting 20% longer to receive elective surgery; people in the GTA are waiting from 27% to 150% longer for access to diagnostic technology. The most important factor is that 80% of the people responding to the survey said that funding should be redistributed more equitably as a result of hospital restructuring. That's the focus of the conversation and the theme we would like to see achieved this morning.

The goals of the restructuring commission should be enhanced to address the real needs of patients, be it in a high-growth area like the GTA/905, or smaller rural and northern cities like Peterborough, Sault Ste Marie, Sarnia or other areas. The historic inequity can only be dealt with through a permanent, patient-based funding formula. Our government's efforts to create an integrated health care system would greatly benefit by coordinating health care resources better so that we can deliver the services closer to home.

I know Dr Sinclair of the Health Services Restructuring Commission is attempting to achieve this goal, and various groups, like the groups I mentioned earlier, the GTA/905 Health Care Alliance as well as the Fair Share for Peel Task Force and some of the other groups within

the other communities across Ontario, are lobbying for a far more equitable method of funding so that we can do what we are attempting to do, what we promised in the Common Sense Revolution, and that was to deliver a patient-based budgeting system for the patients of this province, so that the dollar ends up at the street level where the patients need it.

That's what we are trying to achieve. We've begun that road. The purpose of this resolution is to encourage that further and to get it down to the very end of that road so that we can deliver the services to all of the patients in our province to the best of our ability and in a very cost-efficient manner. To that goal, I hope that the members of our government and members of the opposition will concur with that objective and support the resolution.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I will speak on this matter for just a few moments and then give the rest of my time to two of my colleagues in our caucus.

I must admit that I'm somewhat surprised that the member would talk about the goal of the restructuring commission. He's requesting that the goals of the restructuring committee be enhanced so that the real needs of the patients can be more properly taken into account. Quite frankly, I would have thought with the influence he has with his government caucus colleagues and with the Minister of Health, he certainly could have made sure that that was in actual fact one of the goals in the mandate of the restructuring commission. If it's not, it's too late to talk about that now, because we all know that the restructuring commission has caused an awful lot of uncertainty throughout the province.

I've always maintained that we should be looking at these things not so much from the structural viewpoint, not so much from a governance viewpoint — I think people have a tendency to get totally hung up on this — but rather from a patient's viewpoint: Is the potential patient better off in the community with the different health care services that are available to that patient, whether they be hospital services, whether they be community services, or whatever, as a result of the whole restructuring exercise?

I think the impression that has been left, particularly in many of the communities where the restructuring commission has already visited, is that their main goal and function is to close down hospitals. People are very concerned about that, especially if they don't see the community care facilities and services that everybody seems to be talking about as being available in their individual municipalities.

It has always been my view that not one hospital ought to be closed until the alternative care facilities, the community care services, are actually available. I would have thought that this member might have made his viewpoint better known to the Minister of Health so that when the restructuring commission and organization was set up, that would have been one of its mandates.

I also hope that this resolution doesn't just apply to the three or four growth municipalities that he's talking about in his resolution. I think this kind of funding formula ought to be made available throughout Ontario.

However, if there's one concern that I have about any of these funding formulas, we have to recognize that different parts of the province have different needs and different situations arise. In my own part of the province, for example, and the community I represent, we have a much larger component of senior citizens than in many other communities, and one of the reasons for that is that we have excellent health care services available which attracted a lot of people to retire to the Kingston area. We have to take demographics into account as well, because it's a well-known fact that the elderly will require more health care services than, let's say, rapidly growing areas where you've got many more younger families.

I certainly am going to vote in favour of this resolution. I think it's the right way to go. It will give the communities where people decide to live and reside and work some greater source of comfort that the health care dollars will be made available as the communities increase in size. But I hope at the same time that we do not limit ourselves by putting too many restrictions on any particular ministry by coming up with too many complicated formulas as to how the funding arrangements ought to be arrived at.

I will be voting in favour of this resolution but would encourage the member to take up this matter with his colleague within his own caucus, the Minister of Health, to make sure that there's still something that can be done with respect to the restructuring commission, to make sure that the need to recognize the real needs of the patients is taken into account to a much larger extent by the hospital restructuring commission than has so far been the case.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I want to rise and speak to this motion and, first of all, say I will be supporting it. I think the member is trying to do something which all members of this House try to do, which is advocate for the region they represent.

I only want to take two or three minutes because I want to leave the remainder of the time to our critic for health, the member for London Centre, who will speak on this later. But I couldn't help but get up for a couple of reasons, because I think the member did mention it. I've got to at least give him some credit for that. He said that you can't look at hospital funding or health care funding based only on population, that you also have to look at the demographics of the area.

Being a member from northern Ontario I want to speak to that, because I think members of the Legislature need to understand that in northern Ontario you may not have the population concentration that you would have in a Brampton or a Mississauga, but we have other challenges that challenge the amount of money that we need to spend in health care only to provide minimal services, not to provide the Cadillac of services that you would get living in Mississauga or that you might get living in downtown Toronto.

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I talk about the region of northeastern Ontario, and I'll talk specifically from Temagami to Hearst up to Timmins. You have a number of communities there. You have small, rural municipal hospitals in communities like Cochrane, Matheson, Iroquois Falls and Smooth Rock

Falls that don't have the number of patients to draw from to give them the cost-per-patient ratio to make it look as if they're extremely efficient.

The problem is that they must have emergency departments within those communities. You don't have the population base you have in Toronto. It makes it look like they're much more expensive to keep going. Of course you're going to spend money, because there's a fixed cost to having a hospital. I think members need to know that. If you're going to offer emergency care, if you're going to offer certain basic levels of service in communities like Matheson, Iroquois Falls, Cochrane, Smooth Rock Falls or Hearst, it's going to cost the government some money. I think the government needs to understand that, so when we talk about increased funding I just want to say, "Yoo-hoo, remember us in northern Ontario."

We've been having all kinds of problems over the years in trying to get governments to make sure they put in place the dollars needed to offer even basic minimum care. I was glad and proud to be a member of a government that went a long way to addressing some of those issues. We did deal with hospital funding issues in communities, like Timmins and others, which have been able to increase services such as CAT scans and MRIs and other services.

The other thing I want, in about the last minute I have here, is just to put the end to one myth. One of the things that we're deathly afraid of is this hospital restructuring committee that the government has set up through Bill 26, because what it means to say is that this commission will come to our community and tell us what we need to do with our hospitals.

I have to say to you, I want to stand here and say, we are capable of dealing with it ourselves. We have done so in our community. In the city of Timmins we merged our own hospitals together into one corporate entity called the Timmins and District Hospital. It took time, it cost money, but in the end we've got a good model that everybody was able to buy into. If you come into communities and you start shoving this stuff down their throats, no wonder they get upset and no wonder they say they're mad at the Mike Harris government.

I say to you, trust the people in the communities to make the right decisions. Given the time, they will do so. They're responsible individuals. Second, please stop this myth that this government has nothing to do with hospital restructuring and it's that bad old commission, because we all know you're the government that put in place Bill 26. Bill 26 is the mechanism by which the Minister of Health appoints the hospital restructuring committee and goes out and closes hospitals in our communities. Stop hiding behind the veil of Bill 26 and that commission.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm very pleased to rise and speak today to the resolution of Mr Spina, the member for Brampton North. Certainly the member has done some excellent work in this caucus to date, especially in terms of small business and getting some capital from the banks to help out small businesses. Also I know a very important issue to the member for Brampton North is the way that health services are funded in Ontario. He's right.

In the Common Sense Revolution, the government pledged to bring in a patient-based health care system, not just a straight per-capita model, not just based on historical funding but something that will take the needs of the individual patients into account in each particular area. The government, the Ministry of Health, has moved in that direction. The work of Mr Spina from Brampton North and Mr Clement from Brampton South has brought the concerns of the GTA to the minister's attention.

We've seen some follow-through on the Common Sense Revolution promises. For example, we've set up the joint policy and planning committee, the JPPC — the committee is composed of members of the Ontario Hospital Association, the Ministry of Health and hospital administrators — to come up with a funding formula that recognizes the needs of patients instead of some historical or block funding, something that's going to meet the demand and the needs of the patients.

In fact, I think four out of the 11 hospital administrators on the JPPC are from the 905 code; there's a 36% representation. The JPPC process has recognized the role that population growth plays in the needs of health care services. There are two funds that have been set up. One's an \$18-million fund. That's for hospitals that have experienced higher-than-expected growth and demand for services last year due to an increase in population beyond the provincial average.

In addition to that, we've come up with a \$25-million fund for the same reasons: for population growth and demand for the hospitals in the GTA region. You've seen the Ministry of Health making good on those promises of the Common Sense Revolution and responding to the concerns of Mr Spina and his colleagues from the 905 area.

As you know, it's not just population growth that counts. There are other criteria that would dictate how much money should go to a particular hospital or a particular area for health care: age and sex, definitely important criteria; I've said population growth of the entire catchment area; as well, the distances for our rural members; age for those in retirement communities. Finally, I think it depends a lot on the specific kinds of services offered in the community.

This type of recognition of all these variables — growth, age, sex, distance and rural concerns — is not unique to hospital funding; it's also important in terms of long-term-care funding and mental health services. In fact, the government has set up a \$170-million fund for community-based long-term-care services that will equalize services across the province that respond to those criteria like age, sex and particular patient needs.

The ministry evaluates need based on the age and sex of the population it's serving, compared to what exists in the province as an average. Many areas of the province have benefited from this program, including my own in Niagara. Just this week the minister announced an \$8.1-million program for the Durham region so that patients can receive more nursing and therapy right there in their homes, to recover quicker in the comfort of their own homes and with their families. It allows for more services in terms of rehab, Meals on Wheels, attendant outreach and other services for the people in Mr Spina's region.

The minister recently was in the Niagara Peninsula with some announcements for community care, because we have a growing senior population in Niagara. I think that was about an \$8.7-million reinvestment made recently for Niagara, an area that has traditionally not benefited to the same extent based on the needs of its senior population.

Our long-term-care funding also responds to similar criteria, age and sex, so the facilities with residents in the greatest need now, those that have the highest demands for the greater quality of care, will receive additional funding. Instead of just across the board, we're going to recognize the patients' individual needs.

Finally, a \$23.5-million community investment fund for mental health services: This formula is also based on the need to address the historical inequities in funding issues throughout the region, again based on population, per capita funding, as well as rural concerns, land mass, ethnicity, aboriginal and current bed ratios.

In conclusion, in the Common Sense Revolution our government made a solid commitment to fund health care services based on need, a patient-based health care funding formula, as Mr Spina's resolution calls for. We have begun the difficult process of health care restructuring so that we can focus those scarce dollars, putting more of our health care dollars into direct care for those communities in need. Every dollar we have saved from eliminating waste and duplication has been reinvested in health care services that put patients first, whether it's in the GTA, whether it's in Niagara, whether it's in the north, whether it's in downtown Toronto, putting patients first for a change. I congratulate the member for Brampton North for advocating on behalf of the citizens in Brampton North.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Today I'm very happy to speak to this resolution that Mr Spina brings forward that talks about equitable, patient-based health care and its funding. My question, I suppose, is where the members opposite were on February 27, when I brought a similar motion into this House to be discussed, which talked about appropriately funding health care. I find it very strange that on February 27 this particular member opposed my resolution which called for a formula to be used in its determination that takes into account various factors like geography and demography. I wonder how the member Mr Hudak, who just spoke today, voted on my resolution on February 27.

Moreover, last fall, when the Liberal member for Windsor-Walkerville, Dwight Duncan, brought in a private member's bill that would enshrine the Canada Health Act here in Ontario, every single government member voted opposed to that motion. I'm starting to wonder because if you put a candle right in the middle you wouldn't be able to blow it out, because you can't talk out of both sides of your mouth. The point is you cannot come in here today and be supportive of equitable treatment in health care for your own backyard and say to the rest of us in Ontario, "No, you can do without."

How many of the Conservative members today have met with your finance minister, who managed so wonderfully for his riding to reopen the Burk's Falls Hospital? In the face of massive hospital closures across Ontario,

your finance minister was able to go to Burk's Falls and open a hospital; the only time a hospital has been opened in probably about two decades, your finance minister, in today's climate, has opened a hospital.

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I say to the members opposite, if you are intent, if you are serious about what you say here today in this resolution, that the people in the high-growth GTA deserve good health care, that they ought to have it just like the people from Windsor and Essex county, just like the people who surround Burk's Falls, you must come to the table not just when it's good for your own backyard, but when it's good for every Ontario resident.

If you choose to vote today on this resolution, may I tell you that you are entering a fray the likes of which you won't forget because you will now be on the carpet as being supportive of appropriate health care service right across Ontario. That's your duty. You are government members, you set the policy in place here, and it is your responsibility not just for what happens in Simcoe or in Niagara Falls or indeed in Brampton, but for what happens in Windsor. That's your responsibility too.

You can't today come to the table and decide you want to see appropriate health care funding; you need to come to the table every day. It's just like your Solicitor General who tries to go to bat today for the psychiatric hospital in Brockville, but is part of the table that actually constructed the Health Services Restructuring Commission, the group that proposes to close that psychiatric hospital. That too is unconscionable. You can't have it both ways.

If this is supposed to be political, if this is supposed to be helpful to the people of the GTA, may I tell everyone in Ontario today that when this government sucks dry hospitals across Ontario, that money is not being reinvested in their community. That's the message the government wants you to believe, but having experienced this government for the last two years, the money does not go back in your community.

Windsor's emergency room on the west side: today closed. Has the reinvestment been made in Windsor? No. It is as simple as that. We have two bays where ambulances can drive in and we have five ambulances that have to drive in, with no reinvestment to have reconfigured it before they closed the emergency service. It is as simple as that; it is no more complicated than that. This government is not reinvesting where they are pulling the money from your health care.

Today I think it's laudable, I think it's honourable that the member should want to propose equitable funding, that each Ontarian should expect appropriate health care service, but this, my friends, is a very hypocritical resolution today. With what we have suffered in Ontario in various hot spots where health care service is terrible today, because the Conservative government is pulling money out, this today is shocking to read, frankly.

Last year, two years ago, when the hospital cuts began, there was a very interesting announcement that the Minister of Health made. He made a very special allocation of \$25 million. To where? To the GTA hospitals. He made an extra \$25-million reinvestment, so-called, to hospitals that were in high-growth areas, and most of that money went to hospitals in the very region that is being

discussed today. What was so interesting about it was that when they cut \$10 million from the hospital budget, they made a huge announcement and they reinvested an extra \$1 million. Well, the hospital is still out \$9 million, and it does not take the people who are on the front line very long to figure out that is still a massive cut.

Ladies and gentlemen, should you vote in favour of this resolution, I am thrilled. I am looking forward to having Mr Spina join me in the fight for excellent health care in Windsor and Essex county. I am looking forward to Mr Hudak joining me in the fight for excellence in health care in Windsor and Essex county. All of you must come on board, because every Ontarian, including those in the GTA, deserves that kind of health care.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: Before we start, I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, is there a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this resolution today. As everyone in this country knows, New Democrats very much favour equitable, universal, accessible medicare. This motion is focused on the ability of citizens to be sure they will have equitable access to health care wherever they live, and that as the patterns of population change they will continue to have that access. In terms of the base underlying principles for this motion, we obviously are in favour of it.

I do have a number of concerns, however, that need to be mentioned. I wish the resolution did not focus just on the high-growth areas, as several other members have said, that if we are going to have an equitable patient-based health care funding formula, it needs to be a formula that takes into account not just high growth but the demographics, the geography and all that sort of thing. It is extremely important that as the government moves forward on this, those issues as well as growth are taken into account. I am comforted somewhat by the member from — I'm not sure — Mr Hudak's comments that this is indeed the purpose of the ministry's study.

What is unfortunate is that we are looking at this kind of situation at the same time we're faced with cuts in the health care system. I know this government insists there are not cuts, but when you actually sort out the dollars, in fact what we are seeing is at very best a zero-sum situation for health care funding in the province. What a plan like this does, and everybody has to understand this, is it shifts around the costs, and if it's based only on population, only on population growth, what it means is taking away from one community to give to another and that is why there is so much turmoil in terms of the changes in restructuring health care in this province.

I want to read from an article by John Barber in the *Globe and Mail* on May 14 entitled "Province Plays Giveth-and-Taketh-Away Game." He says in part:

"The right hand giveth and the left taketh away. It's an old game, but altogether too familiar in the painfully zero-sum 1990s.

"No one denies the need to supply new schools, hospitals, roads and sewers to serve expanding populations. That's the cost of growth, and growth is good. Well-intentioned bureaucrats dispensing health care dollars are naturally going to target need....

"But the straightforward arguments get fishy when disinvestment in slow-expanding areas becomes the necessary prelude for more investment in fast-expanding areas. How can it be economical to abandon perfectly good, accessible facilities in one location, only to rebuild them in another? Why should established communities pay so heavily to serve new ones — not only in the loss of their own services but also in the steady tax drain created by subsidies for new hospitals, schools and roads?

"Such linkages are not always obvious in Canada, and the questions rarely put. But in the United States, where pro-sprawl subsidies are so deeply entrenched and urban abandonment is so pervasive, they are blatant. In many US cities, it has become almost impossible to distinguish between growth and decline....

"Every step of the way, well-intentioned bureaucrats and elected officials made rational decisions based on the requirements of efficiency and the sober assessment of need. But the overall result was insanely wasteful and discriminatory against the established communities.

"Ontario's hospital restructuring commission is engaged in the same good work. Can we expect a different result?"

It is not a mistake that people, when they talk about the restructuring commission, talk about it as a hospital restructuring commission rather than a Health Services Restructuring Commission because that is what it has become. What we see is this commission going around looking at the hospital sector, having power only in the hospital sector, and all of the other components of the health care system they may look at, they may give recommendations on, but they in fact have no power to change.

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The resolution talks about health care funding, and that's very important. It's one of the reasons we'll support the resolution even though we have some concerns about its focus just on growth areas, because it's talking about health care overall. It's probably blasphemy to those areas that know they need an investment in hospital services to suggest to them that it is important not to make the mistake of putting all of the health care funding into hospitals in those areas just at the very time we are learning to invest elsewhere in things other than bricks and mortar.

It's important when we talk about health care funding that we look at the discrepancies in the availability of long-term care, that we look at the discrepancies in the availability of other forms of health care services in growth areas, in rural areas, in northern areas and that we realize that part of our task is shifting dollars from the hospital sector into other forms of health care.

It's also probably blasphemy to suggest that those areas that are not heavily hospital oriented in terms of

their health care have a better opportunity to make that shift into an overall health care system than those that have focused all their resources just in the hospital sector. I believe very much, however, that as we look at this whole situation, it is going to be important to look at that, not to try and build hospitals, which we all did for many years, as the measure of health care rather than take the opportunity to look at that reinvestment in a new way. In the growth areas of the GTA, that probably is one of our best benefits.

There is no question that if you have zero growth or very small growth in the health care system, we are going to see services taken away from one community to provide them in another. Particularly now, with the announcement of the OMA agreement with the government, we know that the dollars are going to be even more focused in one sector of the health care system and that the task of reallocating dollars means more will be taken away from established communities.

When you look at 10 hospitals slated for closure in the Metropolitan Toronto area and you look at the demand for new hospitals or growth in hospitals in the GTA area, it doesn't take much imagination to see that what is being taken away from the established communities is going to be reinvested in those other communities.

Is there another way? Obviously there's another way. There's a transitional formula that ought to be used that prevents some of the we-and-them kind of attitude that's beginning to develop. This government has made that attitude worse by taking draconian measures to force an amalgamation in Metropolitan Toronto, to force a change of assessment to market value assessment in the Metropolitan Toronto area, and now appears to be taking away the very services the people in this community paid their dollars to build. This is particularly true in terms of education, where the Metropolitan Toronto area has funded its own education, without provincial grants for the most part, for many years, yet the whole prospect of losing that funding they have worked so hard to build and the choices they have made is very much there.

If we look at this resolution, particularly because it focuses just on the GTA and it isn't talking about an equitable, patient-based formula that takes into account all these other things, it gives rise to concern. I repeat that we believe very much that as populations change we need to look at the shift of services, that services are always, always evolving.

In a municipality like East York, which includes Leaside, where I grew up and went to school, when I went to school in the 1950s there weren't enough schools. We all had to double up; we had 42 people in a room. The schools were built to accommodate that kind of population. Now the population has changed and those schools do not need as much space as they have now. That's certainly happened in my town of London. I think it's happened all over the province. What we have to be aware of is that we have to build in the flexibility for changing population patterns over many years when we're talking about capital investments, when we're talking about service investments.

This resolution speaks to a permanent, patient-based health care funding formula. I must tell you that perma-

gency is not a goal. We should be accepting and recognizing that there needs to be an evolutionary funding formula, a formula that can be altered to meet needs that we can't even imagine at this stage of our lives if health care services change as rapidly as they have in the last 10 to 15 years.

We will support this resolution, but we have a lot of concerns about what its impact will be on the rest of Ontario.

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I'm pleased to rise today to speak on this resolution from my colleague from Brampton North. I thank him for putting this forward because Thursday morning gives us the opportunity to talk to the important issues across this province and there's no doubt in my mind that health is one of the most important.

While his resolution indicates strong support for his own region, I think we need strong support right across the whole province. If we look across this entire province we see growth of a magnitude we have not seen since the 1950s. The difference in this growth pattern is the age of Ontario's population. The 1950s population segment, tagged "baby-boomers," is moving into the middle-aged and senior levels. With this phenomena comes more demanding change in health care requirements.

Couple this with medical diagnostic and treatment advances, add technical advances to this formula and our whole concept of health care changes. We have high areas of greater demand for medical treatment such as kidney dialysis services, diabetes care, cancer treatment and cardiac surgery.

For many years, paramedic training was only offered in the 416 and some 905 areas of the province, leaving other regions, such as the 705 area, without crucial first medical treatment, which can and does save lives. Just recently, I attended a presentation of awards honouring paramedics who responded to a medical emergency at Casino Rama. Their quick reaction to the situation resulted in a life saved. Paramedics in my riding of Simcoe East are trained at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie. This program is an example of wise government spending directed to an area that a need outside the GTA/905 represents.

All regions of this province — 613, 519, 705, 905 and 416 — should have the same medical assistance available. However, we must also recognize that each area of the province is unique, with different demands for health care services. The current health care funding formula takes into consideration the statistics of a region, basing health care funding on the need. The Ministry of Health considers age, gender and growth when developing funding criteria. I agree with this targeting in high-need areas. I feel this creates a better medical care system.

New technology makes our old ideas of health care standards obsolete. We no longer require the same number of patient rooms in our hospitals that we needed in the 1950s. We now need space for technical equipment departments which can be shared by several communities. As an example, the dialysis unit at the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital is designated as a centre for dialysis treatment and includes patients from Barrie, Midland, Penetanguishene and the Muskokas. The dialysis unit at

Soldiers' is serving the acute care needs of my riding and each community creates its own needs from its own variety.

We are considering the individual needs of each community in our province and we are providing our health care funding accordingly. The district health councils are the guiding force behind health care funding in each region. They have actually worked hard and long in their community and are best able to identify health care funding requirements to the Ministry of Health.

While I agree in principle with my colleague's resolution describing the premise of equitable funding, I feel our focus should remain on assisting the needs of every community. We must continue to provide health care funding to all of Ontario rather than specific areas named in this resolution, which I believe we're doing today.

We don't want to forget that some 9,000 beds were closed over the last two administrations. What hospitals were closed? Not one. We want to look at the heart operations that have taken place. We want to look at the new Peter Munk Cardiac Centre with 3,000 operations per year. I predict the day when we will see very few lineups to get heart surgery. We also look at the knee and hip operations that have taken place. The waiting lists are getting shorter in many areas.

When I look at the new technology that's taken place today, I look at the fact sheet that Soldiers' Memorial Hospital in Orillia put out where they talked about the new mammograph lab, the new CT scanner, the new telemedicine whereby they can communicate with hospitals here in Toronto — these were all done in the administration of this government — the regional dialysis program, the new ultrasound. We have a sleep disorder lab in the Soldiers' hospital in Orillia, the first one in Simcoe county. These are the new technologies that are taking place. When I hear people saying we're moving too fast, I think they should look at the facts and see what's really happening across this province.

I say to the Minister of Health, drive on, because technology today is the key to all medical prescription, and that's what we need.

1150

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? I'm trying to follow rotation here but nobody stood up, so I believe it's the member for St Catharines next.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Let them go ahead.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to rise today in support of the member's resolution number 53. On first reading of that resolution I certainly respected the intent of the resolution. As I read through the resolution, I wouldn't like to think that any one area of Ontario should be treated differently than any other area of Ontario.

With that theme in mind, I just want to take time to recognize that in the members' gallery we have a number of volunteer board members from the hospitals in my area here in support of fair funding for health care throughout all Ontario, not just in Durham East or any part of the Durham region: Jim Armstrong, Bruce Smith, Virginia McLaughlan and Steve Wilson, just to name a few members, are from Oshawa General Hospital,

Bowmanville Memorial Hospital and Port Perry hospital, as well as other hospitals throughout Durham. They've all been fighting for equitable funding.

As we well know throughout Ontario, we're underfunded from the federal government. The federal Liberal government has reduced transfer payments by over \$2 billion, and it has been widely known that Ontario is funded to the tune of some \$700 per patient as compared to the average of some \$1,000 per patient. If you look across Ontario, it's widely understood as well that there is, under the current funding formula, a disparity ranging in the area of some \$1,000 for some areas in the province down to perhaps as little as \$400 per patient in areas like the 905.

Really all we're asking in this resolution is I believe the member is looking for equity, and in that regard I fully expect that Mr Gerretsen from Kingston and The Islands and others will be supporting it, because everyone wants to be fair and reasonable when dealing with health care, a very important priority for each and every one of us.

I want to conclude by suggesting that in the province just recently, the minister, Jim Wilson, was in Durham announcing the opening of the MRI unit at Oshawa General Hospital. He also announced \$8.1 million to long-term care that's helping patients in their homes. These are initiatives the minister has taken. In fact, it was the efforts of the whole GTA alliance that I believe the minister recognized with the \$25-million funding for those hospitals, a recognition that there were some existing inequities; also recognizing hospitals in under-serviced areas by providing the \$75-an-hour emergency room coverage, which was important to one of my hospitals that was included.

All in all, I hope all members will be supporting the member's resolution recognizing putting the patient first and giving every patient full access to hospital funding without preference for area or any other demographic reason. It's a fair and reasonable resolution and I believe all members should be supporting it.

Mr Bradley: I think what we have to demonstrate to people in this province is that you can't have it both ways when you're on the government side. You can't stand in this House and extol the virtues of the so-called Common Sense Revolution, which calls for drastic cuts in funding for services across the province and then go home and pull on the shirt that says you want to save your local hospital or you want to make sure your local hospital has all the funding. That's what the Common Sense Revolution is all about.

But then they like to point somewhere else. I'd like to say I agree with Premier Harris. Here's what Premier Harris said about people who do whining about other levels of government: "We suggest that the Premier and this Legislature should turn their energies to fix that which is broken here in the province of Ontario. I tell you this: If the Premier spent as much time working towards making Ontario great again as he spends at pointing fingers and running down other levels of government, then Ontario would be great again." That's Mike Harris talking about Bob Rae. Well, we should apply that to Mike Harris himself.

Now I remember in this House when Mike Harris used to say to the federal government, "You've got to cut." He said to the Mulroney government, when Jean Charest was a minister: "You know, you've got to be cutting your expenditures. The deficit's out of control." I think Jean Charest agreed with Mulroney then because he was part of the Mulroney government. He agreed with that.

Mike Harris wanted them to cut tremendously. The Mulroney government, with Jean Charest as a minister, started these cuts in transfers to the provinces, when Floyd Laughren was the Treasurer of this province. He will remember that well. So Mike Harris said, "Look, when I develop the Common Sense Revolution, I'm going to take into account any potential cuts that are coming." He took that into account and he still made the promise, during the last election campaign, "Certainly, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." That was Mike Harris who said that during the election campaign in May 1995. He had taken that into account already.

The provinces said to the federal government: "We don't want designated funding. What we want is block funding. Give us the money and we will decide how to spend it." So the federal government transfers money to the provincial government. What do Mike Harris and the revolutionaries do with that money? They give it away in a tax cut. They don't take that money from the federal government and put it into health care. Instead, they give it away in a tax cut which benefits the richest people in our society the most.

Boy, if I were making \$300,000 a year, I would be delighted with that tax cut that's coming, because that's what the tax cut is all about. That's what they're doing with those federal transfer payments. They're taking that money and they're whisking it right through in a tax cut for the rich instead of spending it on health care as they should be spending it. That's deplorable, although in some ridings it's different, and I know some of the Conservative backbenchers must be beside themselves over this.

Ernie Eves, who's the Treasurer and the good buddy of Mike Harris, sits next to him, gets a special deal for Burk's Falls. Maybe my friend Mr Spina should go to speak to Ernie Eves and see how he got that special deal for Burk's Falls, and try to get that for his area.

I want to finally quote Mr Harris again — I really liked him in opposition — about this whining thing. Here's what he said, more about whining about other levels of government — and he's talking about the Rae government in this case — "So it actually is a disgrace when the Premier of the province...spends his time whining, pointing fingers, blaming others. That is not the legacy, that is not the history, of this province that I grew up in and that will not be the legacy and the history of this province when we bring common sense back to it."

You know something? Mike Harris was right when he said that. He's telling you people to quit whining and pointing fingers where they shouldn't be pointed and get after your cabinet colleagues, get after Tom Long and Guy Giorno; they're the ones who have all the power in this government.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Spina, you have two minutes to sum up.

Mr Spina: I want to thank all of the colleagues here in the House, the members for Kingston and The Islands, Cochrane South, Niagara South, Windsor-Riverside, London Centre, Simcoe East, Durham East and St Catharines. We thank you all for your comments, and particularly the parliamentary assistant, Tim Hudak, who reiterated the direction of the ministry. We know that the equitable funding is in the process of being delivered, and I'm very thankful for the direction that we are headed in.

I wanted to address the point that both the opposition parties brought up, which I think was a good point, but I take issue with one comment and that was about us speaking out of both sides of our mouth. You see, the reason that many of us, and me in particular, voted against the member for Windsor-Sandwich's resolution was because of one particular clause. What she said in her resolution was that any savings as a result of restructuring within that area would be reinvested in that region, and that was the fundamental problem I had.

The reason I had that problem I think is probably best articulated by the member for London Centre, who said that building hospitals is not the measure of health care, it's the delivery of services. If you reduce the amount of bricks and mortar in a place like Windsor, which has a catchment of 260,000 for hospitals, to an area like Brampton with a catchment of 320,000 and one hospital, that's the purpose of restructuring.

The Acting Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr Spina has moved private member's resolution number 53. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, please rise.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion is carried.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair. This House will resume at 1:30 pm.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): I would like to remind the House of an important election promise made to persons with disabilities by the Premier in 1995, which he has since ignored. He promised that he would pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act in his first term, towards which he has done nothing. He has refused to meet with a broad-based community coalition called the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, after having promised to work with them on this important and necessary legislation.

Instead of delivering new resources to overcome barriers facing people with disabilities in Ontario, he has done just the opposite by cutting previous funding for this important social purpose.

One year ago today this House unanimously passed a resolution supporting the enactment of an Ontarians with

Disabilities Act. This government has done nothing to date. The disabled community is calling on the Premier to fulfil his commitment. Representatives of the disabled community are here today. They deserve answers as to why the government has not acted on its promise to them. They have every right to expect that work will begin today.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I too wish to call on the government to pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act as soon as possible and to call on the Premier to meet with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee.

When the Premier wrote to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee during the last election promising this new legislation, he also promised new funds for accommodating the needs of persons with disabilities. But what is the record of this government? It's an appalling record which has made people with disabilities the first and worst victims of budget cuts.

Look at their record. They have cut funding to Wheel-Trans in Toronto and other paratransit services across Ontario. They've endeavoured to cut social assistance benefits for persons with disabilities when they promised they would not. They have tried to dump policy areas like long-term care on municipalities which could not afford to support them. They threatened to reduce the protection for building accessibility in the building code.

Their red tape task force demands a legislative reduction of the duty to accommodate persons with disabilities in the Human Rights Code. They've cut funding to the Human Rights Commission, which has led to disability discrimination cases being turned away in record numbers. They've cut funding to local school boards in a way that has led to the reduction in services for students with disabilities. They've abolished a fund within the Ontario public service dedicated to removing systemic barriers facing groups such as persons with disabilities.

The list goes on and on and every item is just another nail in the coffin of the government's dead promise to persons with disabilities.

BRIAN HARRISON

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It is with deep regret that I must stand in the House today to inform the members of the recent passing of Metro Toronto councillor Brian Harrison. Last week Scarborough residents lost one of our city's most respected politicians following his long battle with cancer.

Brian Harrison served Scarborough well for 34 years. He was first elected in 1963 as school trustee of ward 7 in Scarborough. In 1965 Brian was elected to Scarborough council and in 1967 he was elected Scarborough controller, at which he served until 1982. In 1988 he was elected Metro Toronto councillor for Scarborough City Centre, at which he served until his recent passing.

During his years of public service, Brian served on numerous elected government committees. In addition to these, he was appointed to a number of public boards and commissions, including the Metro zoo management board, the Toronto Transit Commission and the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

Over the years Brian developed a reputation as a staunch supporter of Scarborough and Scarborough residents and was respected for always having a thorough and deep knowledge of the issues. He was widely viewed as one of the city's hardest-working politicians.

His partner, Adrianna, his children Scott, Cindy, Karen, Sean, Lynn and Cheryl, their mother, Georgina, his grandchildren Mark and Blake and his sister, Carol, survive Brian. Brian and his family have requested that donations be made to the chairman's fund of the Zoological Society of Metropolitan Toronto. Thank you.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): My statement today is directed at the Minister of Health. In a recent article in the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal Beth Chase talks about the inexcusable treatment her father, Charles William Clarkson, received as a result of funding cuts to our health care system.

I quote: "I am sure that my father's faith in our country was a comfort to him knowing that when he was elderly, sick and disabled, his needs would be cared for. Sadly, he was greatly disappointed."

During Mr Clarkson's last stay in hospital his doctors decided he was not well enough to return home. The problem was that there were no long-term-care beds available, so Mr Clarkson was required to start paying immediately \$40.29 per day for a hospital bed, just about what his pension allowed, no money for his apartment.

Mr Clarkson was always employed. He fought in the Second World War for our freedom. Never once did he receive government assistance. Then in the months preceding his death he lost his vision, his wife and finally, thanks to the government cutbacks, he suffered the most severe blow of all: He was robbed of his dignity as he was forced to worry about financial pressures.

There's a list of 400 people waiting for long-term-care beds in Thunder Bay. Until this wait is eliminated, the \$40.29 should be on hold. This government has cut hospital services in our community and there's not a single person who is convinced that this will not affect patient care, which our cash-strapped hospitals are doing their best to provide. We now know that the true cost of this government's restructuring is a loss of dignity, and that cost is too high.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I also wish to mark this one-year anniversary of my colleague from London Centre's resolution, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The resolution was passed unanimously. The Minister of Citizenship promised to pass this law within its first term. The first term is almost half over and there has been no public consultation, no draft legislation, no statement of principles, not even a commitment on a process to consult with the public to develop this law. Why the delay, Minister?

This government says it wants to get people working, yet every day that it delays on its pledge to pass the Ontarians with Disabilities Act just extends the extraordinary unemployment which persons with disabilities face

and adds to the public debt. While the government drags its feet, more barriers are created, more opportunities to hire persons with disabilities are lost and more persons with disabilities are forced to remain on social assistance when they would rather be working.

It's time for the government to pass the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Start now with a thorough public consultation across Ontario. Let it be open to the public and fully accessible to persons with disabilities. Let's agree that the new law will achieve a barrier-free society for persons with disabilities by the year 2000. Let's agree that the law will be strong and effective and contain strong enforcement provisions.

Premier, what are you waiting for? The Ontarians with Disabilities Act committee is here today waiting to speak with you, ready to help you fulfil your commitment.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS MONTH

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): May is Multiple Sclerosis Month and I'm pleased to be able to stand to recognize this very important occasion. Multiple sclerosis is a disease of the central nervous system that affects more than 50,000 Canadians, and women are more frequently affected than men in a ratio of three to two.

Our government's reinvestment of \$170 million has helped many people with MS to live independently through the development of flexible service arrangements in home care and attendant care, as well as greater ability for these services to reflect the individual needs and condition of the consumer. In fact, part of the minister's announcement of \$8.7 million in Niagara last month will go to help people with MS in the Niagara region.

Each year the MS society hosts the carnation campaign, where people receive carnations in exchange for donations for the MS society. This year's campaign was held on May 8, 9 and 10. Premier Harris himself helped kick off the campaign by handing out carnations at the Yonge and Bloor subway station.

The goal for Metro Toronto was to raise \$100,000 and I'm pleased to announce today that they have surpassed that goal. The campaign so far has raised \$102,000 and there still are more donations to come. I'd like to offer my congratulations to the 1,200 volunteers who handed out carnations at shopping malls, retail locations and TTC stations. Thank you as well to the many people who have made donations and help the MS Society surpass its goal.

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ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): The Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee just held a "face the disability community" session here at Queen's Park. Both opposition parties were represented and spoke to this group. There are hundreds of people today in this building — none of them in here because of solidarity. Because this particular Legislature is not accessible, they are in different rooms throughout this building watching us on TV today.

What was disgraceful about today is that not one of the 81 members of the government side had the guts to face the community, not one of you. The Speaker had the

courage to meet with them previously, but not one of you had the guts to come there and speak to the disabled community, look them in the eye and tell them why you have reneged on your commitment to pass the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, why you and your members, your minister, your Premier, have not had the gumption to follow through on what was a pretty clear commitment two years ago when you were looking for votes in this province, when you said, "We're going to pass the Ontarians with Disabilities Act."

What we have seen is two years of refusals by the Premier to meet with them. What we've seen is two years of inaction. What we have seen is a bunch of gutless wimps who will not meet the community today.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. There's parliamentary language, and I don't think "gutless wimps" falls within that.

Mr Agostino: I will withdraw "wimps." Clearly, what they have done today, the betrayal — there are over 200 people here today. I challenge you to go downstairs after this, meet them in the rooms, meet them in the lobby and tell them why you've betrayed them.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, I appreciate your tenor and I understand your emotional involvement in the issue, but you must maintain parliamentary language. Although you may have withdrawn — I would you ask that you withdraw the "gutless wimps" charge, please.

Mr Agostino: If parliamentary tradition says I must, I will.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I too want to deal with a broken promise, a promise M. Harris made in 1995 to introduce the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. What it clearly points out to me is that this government has unequal treatment for different sectors of the population: It treats the powerful with great respect; it gives developers respect by dealing with the development charges; it transfers to landlords a great deal of money from the poor to the wealthy; but when it comes to dealing with people with disabilities, this government is in contempt of their needs.

People with disabilities represent 15% to 16% of the population. They want and they need, and we argue for, a bill that deals with unfair barriers as they relate to people with disabilities and access to jobs, access to housing, access to public transit, access to schools and to this Legislature. M. Harris promised that in 1995.

The member for London Centre, in a resolution, attempted to remind the minister about his obligation and his promise and has failed in that as well. He has completely disregarded them in that regard. At some point, this minister, this government have got to deal with people with disabilities.

BUDGET

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): The people of Wellington were very pleased to see several positive measures for rural Ontario in the provincial budget last week. First, the budget for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will be maintained for this year at \$405 million,

up from \$400 million last year. I believe credit is due to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for his leadership and commitment in advocating on behalf of rural Ontario and the extent to which he underscored to the provincial government the importance of maintaining the OMAFRA budget.

Ontario's farm organizations also deserve credit for their united efforts in speaking forcefully on behalf of Ontario's farmers on this matter. It is very reassuring that the provincial government recognizes the importance of agriculture to our economy and went even further by increasing the ministry budget.

Other positive initiatives for agriculture in the budget included:

The creation of a three-year, \$30 million rural job strategy. Three million dollars will be spent this summer to create 3,000 jobs for young people in rural Ontario. This rural job strategy has been designed to stimulate job creation, promote investment, develop export growth and increase business competitiveness in rural Ontario.

The extension of the retail sales tax rebate on building materials for farm buildings for yet another year.

These initiatives, taken together, show how the decisions we make in government can have a direct, positive impact on the lives of the people we serve and that there continues to be a role for a strong provincial government bringing forward innovative programs designed to meet the needs of the people in Ontario.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I rise on a point of privilege to indicate to the House that there are several hundred numbers of the public here today who have been invited by the member for London Centre, myself and the member for Hamilton East. I see the Minister of Municipal Affairs getting up and making much of looking around in the public galleries and not seeing those several hundred people that I'm referring to.

Interjections: What's the point?

Ms Lankin: That's the point. If I may indicate —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Your point of privilege is in order. It's not in order to comment on other members.

Ms Lankin: Fair enough. Thank you.

I point out that those several hundred members of the public, who are also members of the disability community, are not here present in the chamber in the public galleries because of the major problem of inaccessibility of the public galleries for the large number of members of the community who are here.

Mr Speaker, I know that you met with them and I know that you gave an undertaking if members of the three parties and the Board of Internal Economy would look at this issue and deal with this issue, we might be able to move to an expeditious resolution.

I just want to give notice, Mr Speaker, that at the end of question period I will be rising to seek unanimous consent for this Legislature to immediately move into an emergency debate on the issue of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act this afternoon, and I hope that will receive support from all three parties.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent is obviously in order, and at the proper time, of course, I will entertain that unanimous consent.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker —

The Speaker: The same point of order? I just ruled on the point of order. This has to be different, a different point of privilege.

Mr Agostino: Mr Speaker, it's along the same lines, but the point of privilege or the point of order would be on the same issue of accessibility into this building. I know that you have met with members of the disabled community. The concern is that there are only four spaces in this building that would be available —

The Speaker: You seem to be entering into debate. We're going to seek unanimous consent to go to that debate, I think, later, but it's not a point of privilege. How many accessible spots there are in this building isn't a point of privilege. It's not a point of order. It's a point of interest, but it's not any of those first two.

Mr Agostino: I guess the concern I have is, how do we address the fact that hundreds of people are sitting in rooms today —

The Speaker: You're going to address it exactly the way the member for Beaches-Woodbine is proposing to address it. That's perfectly in order when she asks for unanimous consent for an emergency debate. Beyond that, nothing else is really in order.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to inform the House that this will be the last day the pages will be working with us and I think we'd all like to extend our personal thanks.

Applause.

The Speaker: There you are. Thank you very much. Standing ovations are a rare thing in this House, so you should be duly honoured.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier. Ontario was surprised to hear that you're considering fingerprinting every single individual in the province of Ontario. For many in Ontario it's quite a frightening thought. It's a thought of the state watching their every move. It's not acceptable to many people in Ontario and is frankly the ultimate in the bully tactic.

The question to you is, will you put the people's minds at ease and simply say that you're not planning to pursue this dangerous move?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): We've never considered fingerprinting anybody in the province, other than I gather the police do fingerprint criminals. I think that's the common practice in Canada and around the world.

I know that Toronto has been studying thumb-imaging or finger-imaging as a method of preventing fraud. There have been some concerns about that, although I under-

stand 60% of welfare recipients in a survey said they supported it if it would stop fraud. There have been some concerns should it just be used for welfare as opposed to perhaps in generalities. As you know, the Minister of Health has been leading an interministerial team to look at ways that we can look at the various programs in preventing fraud and that type of imaging has been one of the things they've been looking at.

I appreciate your viewpoint. I guess your advice is, "Don't look at anything to solve fraud." We, however, think we should continue to look at the best available options, and of course, we've made no decisions.

1350

Mr Phillips: My 94-year-old mother-in-law lives with us. She has lived her entire life as a law-abiding individual. She values her privacy. She values her dignity and her self-worth. The thought of your ordering her to go down to some office and have her fingerprint taken so she can qualify for health care is objectionable. It's objectionable to her; it's objectionable to me.

Will you put her mind at ease, my mind at ease and the minds of the people of Ontario at ease that you are not considering fingerprinting, finger imaging, for my 94-year-old mother-in-law?

Hon Mr Harris: There is a huge difference between what the Toronto welfare and social services department is looking at and fingerprinting. I would say to you that today we do insist that to get health care benefits in the province of Ontario, somebody submit to a card. We insist that for a driver's licence you actually get your picture taken. I suppose you might call that a mug shot; I call it a form of identification to ensure that this is exactly the person who should be driving.

There are a number of people who are looking at ways of identification to stop fraud, and I believe it is incumbent upon this government to continue to evaluate any new techniques or methods to prevent fraud that are not intrusive. This is not anything new. We've been looking at this for a year or so. You have heard from the minister, you have heard from the Chair of Management Board, and you understand what the social services department of Toronto is trying to do to prevent fraud.

Mr Phillips: My 94-year-old mother-in-law has never been involved in fraud. She's not someone who needs you watching over her. She's not someone who is abusing the government — your government. She's a decent individual who simply wants her privacy. The question remains that it's you, not anyone else: "Harris Mulls Fingerprint ID for all Ontarians," "Harris Backs ID Scans." You have to live with your own words and deal with your own actions.

I ask you once again, will you put my mother-in-law's mind at ease, will you put the minds of the people of Ontario at ease, that you are not going to step over this very dangerous line? Will you assure the people of Ontario that you are not going to insist on all the people of Ontario having their fingerprints taken so you can watch over them?

Hon Mr Harris: I can assure the member that no measure would ever be taken by this government unless there was 100% complete assurance from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, not our government, that

nobody's privacy is under any threat. Your mother-in-law can take assurance from that.

Secondly, your mother-in-law can take assurance from something else: that every dollar taken in fraud from the health care system, from the welfare system or from any of the other government entitlement programs, every dollar being taken in fraud comes from your mother-in-law, and she can rest assured that we're interested in stopping that too.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday the chairperson of the Ottawa General Hospital, Mr Pierre Richard — no stranger and no enemy to this provincial government — came to this place to tell members of the assembly and members of the press that your Health Services Restructuring Commission's estimated savings from the dramatic restructuring of hospitals in Ottawa are wildly overstated. Mr Richard said that in Ottawa the commission has overstated the potential savings by approximately 70%. He went on to indicate, and I quote the chairman of the Ottawa General Hospital, "The commission's numbers are wrong, and it will create a crisis in patient care." What do you have to say to the health care community in Ottawa-Carleton about this difference over numbers?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I thank the honourable member for the question. I'll answer it the same way I answered it when I was asked in this House yesterday the exact question. That is that the administrators of the hospitals that had the press conference yesterday indicated during that press conference that they had already submitted this data to the commission before the deadline. That's why there is this legislative process to ensure that the proper data is being used by the commission and submitted by the groups that hold that data.

I think the process has been accessed by the proper authorities and the commission will take that data into consideration as it makes its determinations.

Mr Conway: The process. Two or three weeks ago you, Minister, went to Owen Sound and you had some very interesting things to say about hospitals in Grey-Bruce when you weren't talking about gun control which, according to the Sun Times report, occupied a lot more of your address. You were dropping, according to this press report, heavy hints about what was not going to happen in Grey-Bruce to hospitals like Meaford, the same kind of hints that the Alliston press tells us you've been dropping at home in south Simcoe about what's not going to happen to the hospital in your own constituency, heavy hints; no talk about the district health council, no talk about the commission. "Trust me, I'm Jim Wilson. You people can trust that there's nothing terrible going to happen up in Meaford or down in Alliston."

And you have the nerve to tell the people in Ottawa, your friend Pierre Richard and our friend from Vanier, that they've got to play this by a different game, by a different set of rules? Whom do you think you are kidding?

Hon Mr Wilson: I've made it very clear that this government recognizes the difference between multiple-

hospital cities and single-hospital towns, and we make no apology, after we were informed by the Health Services Restructuring Commission and numerous DHCs that the previous government sent DHCs out with no benchmarks at all for rural Ontario, no guidance at all for rural Ontario, single-hospital towns.

A panel of experts is putting together a policy framework for the commission and for district health councils. It's long overdue. I regret previous governments didn't do it. There are travel distances; there are weather conditions; there are greater difficulties in rural Ontario to access health care than there is in multiple-hospital large cities.

Mr Conway: In my home community of Pembroke the commission has already had to admit that its initial estimates about savings were off by at least 30%. Women's College Hospital in Toronto has advanced information to suggest that the commission's numbers about savings are off by \$50 million, something in the order of 80%. Yesterday we had the group from Ottawa saying that in their estimate, based on independent analysis done by tier-one accounting groups like Deloitte and Touche, the commission's numbers about estimated savings are off by a factor of 70% in the national capital region.

My question to you is simply this: Should the people in places like Ottawa, Pembroke, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Toronto just tell their accountants and people like Deloitte and Touche to get lost and, rather, they should hire Ernie Eves to go and beat the stuffing out of you and pretend that all of these places that I've just mentioned are just like Burk's Falls and Alliston and, yes, Bill Murdoch Land in north Grey?

Hon Mr Wilson: It's an extremely unfair proposition. It's mixing apples and oranges. The commission itself, under the leadership of Dr Duncan Sinclair, has said many, many times — and you are free to meet with him at any time you like, Mr Conway, to bring your points directly to the commission. You are free to do that.

I didn't see any submissions in Ottawa from the Liberal Party. I didn't see you avail yourselves of the process. I see a lot of puffery in here, but there is a very serious legislative process out there. You are free to avail yourselves of it, as those responsible hospitals in Ottawa have done, by providing the commission with up-to-date data.

1400

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Premier: One year ago today my colleague the member for London Centre moved a private member's motion. It was passed unanimously by this House, including 25 members of your own caucus. That motion had two points: first, that you keep your personal promise made on May 24, 1995, in a letter from you to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee that your government would enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act within your first term of office; second, that your government work together with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, to develop this legislation.

Premier, members and supporters of that committee are here today because nothing has happened. Your minister met only once, almost a year ago, with the committee. That's the last they heard from your government until you wrote to say you would not meet with them again today. All you have done in a year is to study the US legislation. Premier, will you keep your word and honour your promise to introduce an Ontarians with Disabilities Act?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): You bet I will.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): That's an interesting answer. We're pleased to hear that assurance yet again, but we'd like to see some action. Unfortunately, today we're celebrating two years of inaction, two years since your promise, another year of inaction since the resolution was passed.

Premier, I showed this to your minister in a question a few weeks ago in this House. This is a leaked document, a business plan from your Minister of Citizenship. Nowhere in there is there any reference to an Ontarians with Disabilities Act — no plans; nothing being done on that. In fact, we have a quote in the paper from a ministry spokesperson saying the government's not sold on that kind of legislation.

Now that you've said you're going to introduce it, and we know you haven't consulted with the community, why don't you give us some time lines? When are you going to meet with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee and when will we see that bill introduced in this Legislature?

Hon Mr Harris: It is so obvious but I guess I'll have to repeat it for the members: For five years you and your party did nothing in this whole area and for legislation, which is one of the reasons we committed to do so, and to do so within our first term of office, and that commitment has not changed.

As you will be aware, the minister has met with a number of people on a number of occasions. As well, Mr Lepofsky and the ODA committee have known and have been told that the first priority of the ministry is the equal opportunity plan and the initiative for vulnerable adults, and those two initiatives have been launched. The policy work has begun on other aspects of our disability access strategy. I can tell you that during a meeting last summer, quite frankly, the minister invited Mr Lepofsky and the ODA committee to participate in the development of the equal opportunity plan and the vulnerable adults initiatives. Mr Lepofsky, very politely I might add, declined that invitation.

However, there are a number of initiatives that have been undertaken. We committed through consultation and reviewing other legislation that we felt —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It's no wonder to any of us that the disabled community is very disillusioned and finds it very difficult to believe this Premier when he says he will bring this act forward. They have seen occasion after occasion where this Premier and his minister have stated they have taken positions that they have not in fact taken. It's quite disgraceful for you to stand up and make those claims when you know those

people are in this building. They will be furious with you for saying that.

You say we did nothing. Well, there's an area where we did one thing that appears to be eroding in front of our very eyes. We made a policy that any transportation system that got capital dollars from our government would go ahead with accessible buses. Your Minister of Transportation has given permission to Ottawa and Mississauga not to buy those, partly because the buses aren't available, but he hasn't required them to give lifts as the Metropolitan Toronto bus services have had to do when faced with that problem. There is example after example —

The Speaker: Member for London Centre, thank you very much. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: I tell you that our record, compared to the five years of inaction of the NDP — you have had, as a party, the absolute best rhetoric on the disabled and the least effective action record of any political party in Ontario's history. In fact it is disgraceful.

When I think of how this government, and the government of Ontario under different parties, including, I might add, in this case, even the Liberal Party, have done more than the New Democratic Party, the party of all rhetoric and no action on this issue, how you have enough nerve to stand in your place and ask these questions today I do not know.

This minister has taken a number of initiatives — so has the government — \$30 million over the next five years, pilot projects, college and university level, help students with learning disabilities realize their full potential, additional \$15 million annually in community and social services to help more families with care for their children who have developmental disabilities. Yes, we committed to bring forward an act and we committed to research and think it out and do it carefully —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Minister of Education: A few weeks ago, the Minister of Education and Training refused to answer our questions about who will pay the upfront costs of amalgamating school boards.

We know that to amalgamate literally dozens of school boards across the province there will be some fairly upfront costs. The budget estimates are now out and we see that there is no fund for the Ministry of Education and Training to pay the upfront costs of school board amalgamation. Despite your claim to have frozen grants to school boards, they have experienced, on average, a 5% cut this year. Now it seems they will also have to cover these upfront costs of your school board amalgamation scheme. Where will that money come from? From their operating budgets. What do their operating budgets cover? They cover classroom education.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Hampton: Can you tell us now what the upfront costs of your school board amalgamations will be, and where will the money come if it's not going to come from classroom budgets?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): Let me say to the leader of the third party that we announced some time before this year that we would have a stable funding system this year, that we would not ask school boards for further savings reductions, and we have not. We were able to announce a few weeks ago that we'd have a stable funding system for education in the 1997-98 school year so that school boards could provide all the programs and all the services they provide to students now to students during that time period. We have already announced that.

We have also said in our legislation and publicly since the introduction of Bill 104 that we specifically have put the Education Improvement Commission in place to help school boards during the transition. We know there will be some costs during that transition and the EIC is in place now, with the passage of Bill 104, to take care of those transition issues.

The member opposite has probably had a look at what those transitions might be. He realizes that going from three directors of education to one director of education, and from three departments taking care of capital to one department taking care of capital, these changes will —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Supplementary, third party leader.

Mr Hampton: This minister is trying to skate the same circle as the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health has had to acknowledge in the last few weeks that it's going to cost about \$450 million in severance pay to lay off nurses and throw them out in the street and money to close hospitals.

This minister refuses to acknowledge that it's going to cost severance money to lay people off, that it's going to cost money up front to amalgamate school boards. He hasn't answered the question: Where is that money coming from? Your ministry estimates don't show a fund to cover these amalgamation costs. The only conclusion we can then come to is that it will have to come out of school board operating budgets. School board operating budgets pay for classroom education. Some boards estimate \$2 million in one year for the severance and other amalgamation costs. If the money isn't going to come from classrooms, where is it going to come from? You owe the children of this province an answer.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Once again it's disappointing that the leader of the third party would completely skip over one very obvious fact: School board operating budgets, collectively across the province, right now pay for \$150 million worth of administration costs that will not be there post the amalgamation of these boards. We'll go in some cases from having three or four directors of education to having one director of education. We'll be reducing the cost of the bureaucracy, reducing the cost of the administration of our school system so we can focus resources in the classroom. The Education Improvement Commission is there, part of Bill 104, to help us go through this transition period.

1410

I think the member opposite, if he looks at this, looks at the way we are going about this transition period, looks at the stable funding to make sure students aren't affected during this transition period, will see that this is

a very reasoned, thought-through transition that will take us to a new and better system of education in Ontario.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): A thought-through transition which will only take eight months and which the \$150 million in savings the minister refers to includes a cut of about \$9 million in education supplies to classrooms, not administrative savings.

Earlier this week the Minister of Education and Training spoke to a group of parents at Miller's Grove public school in Mississauga. He told them they would be pleased with an announcement he would make shortly. We expect it will probably be tomorrow, since there won't be any question period next week. He said that along with announcing the new funding formula for education, he would be announcing a reimplementation of junior kindergarten for September 1998.

Obviously we would welcome the reintroduction of junior kindergarten, since it benefits all children and parents want it, but it costs money. You've cut boards' budgets, you're taking away their taxation rights, you're going to make them pay for the amalgamation plan. What else is going to have to be cut in order to pay for the reintroduction of junior kindergarten, which you cut before?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I wonder whose interests the member for Algoma thinks are served by putting things forward as he has today. We are not going to have to reintroduce junior kindergarten because this party, this government, has kept the promises we made in the Common Sense Revolution. We are funding junior kindergarten now at the same level as other programs in the education system. We will continue to do that. We have already said there will be a stable funding system for all the programs, including junior kindergarten, from 1997-98.

Yes, we will be bringing out a new allocation model. Yes, the province will be assuming its responsibility in funding education so every student in this province has an opportunity to a first-class education, something your government failed to do. Your government created second-class students in this province. Our government is going to clean that up and make sure that every student in this province has an opportunity to a first-class education. I for one am proud of that.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. We understand that the government is preparing to introduce massive changes to the current social assistance system. A widely rumoured change to eligibility requirements could have a terrible impact on the lives of people with disabilities. The disabled community is expecting that you will be changing your working definition of "disability" in order to limit the number of people eligible for social assistance.

Minister, will you guarantee that whatever policy you finally announce, no person with a disability who is presently receiving assistance will see his or her benefits either taken away or reduced, and will you please assure

us that the future of people who acquire disabilities will not be an even greater struggle than it is now?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): As the honourable member will realize, one of the commitments we have made is to move people with disabilities off the welfare system. That program is not designed for their unique needs. We have been designing a new income support program for people with disabilities which will be much more generous and much more flexible than what they currently receive on welfare. Second, we're also designing a new supports to employment program so that those people with disabilities who can work and want to work will indeed be able to do so with the appropriate supports.

Mr Morin: Minister, let me remind you of your government's pre-election commitment that funding to seniors and the disabled will not be cut. That's what you said. We know so well your track record.

I have a document here produced by your own ministry and obtained through a freedom of information request dealing with your proposed welfare changes. It says: "It is discouraging and sad to see how the cost containment proposals reflect a certain naïveté and lack of compassion towards persons with disabilities. These individuals are struggling with a shrinking FBA allowance, 'sucked' increasingly now by new medication costs, user fees" etc.

Your own bureaucrats are saddened and discouraged. The community is telling you that this is dangerous. Let me tell you what you are doing. You are depriving these people of human dignity.

I ask you again: Will you fulfil your election promise and guarantee that aid for persons with disabilities will not be cut?

Hon Mrs Ecker: We are not cutting the program for those with disabilities; what we are doing is enhancing it. We are taking them off —

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): You are taking them off the system.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Perhaps the honourable member across the way thinks that welfare is the place to have people with disabilities. I disagree. Individuals with disabilities have unique and special needs. We have spent the last year consulting with the disabled community because we want to have a program that —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Hamilton East, I'm warning you and I won't warn you again. Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. We've spent the last year consulting with the disabled community because we believe they need better service from social support, not what they currently have. They need a service that meets their needs. They need a service that will help them, those who can and those who wish to, to get back into the workforce with the appropriate supports. We are not cutting the program.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I want to ask the Minister of Health about one aspect of the tentative

agreement he has reached with the doctors. That is this new committee, the new health care delivery systems committee, which is going to consist of three members of the Ontario Medical Association, three members appointed by the Ministry of Health, three members appointed by the Ontario Hospital Association and one member appointed by the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

As you know, the mandate of this new committee is to study and make recommendations with respect to models for new health care systems, including the delivery of physician services to insured persons within such systems, and then it goes on. Some would say this is a recipe for simply entrenching the fee-for-service system and the ability of doctors to control all the changes that are happening in the restructuring of the health sector.

The real tragedy is that you haven't added to this committee the other players in the field. Where are the rest of the integrated health care professionals, long-term care, those who are nurses, those who are working in the community part? You've entrenched —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for London Centre. Minister of Health.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I think it's a very good question by the honourable member, but I'd ask the honourable member to think about this as the physicians and government agreement, and that's why it talks about physicians and government in its committees.

We have a number of other committees dealing with integrated health systems, including the Joint Provincial Nursing Council, which is taking a lead; the Health Services Restructuring Commission; the JPPC, the joint policy and planning committee, which is hospitals and the Ministry of Health.

Integrated health systems and integrated delivery systems are on every association's agenda. Last week I met with the alliance which came together to fight your MSA proposal, which includes the nurses and the doctors and the hospitals. Twenty associations are on that alliance and they have a committee consulting also with the ministry on integrated health delivery systems, integrated health systems.

Right now the ministry is trying to take all that advice — we've had a lot of meetings about it — and put together a policy framework with input from everybody.

Mrs Boyd: Anyone hearing you would know that you and your ministry are still looking at health care in its various silos and not getting all the players at the table. You made a commitment. You announced last fall that your primary reform measure in this would be the reform of primary care. It got put off until the spring. Now we learn that this new committee is going to take the place of the work that was being done on primary health care, that you've extended Dr Wendy Graham's appointment for another year, even though she was supposed to have finished her work by now and even though everyone who talks to you about the integration of health care says that closures of hospitals, all the work that's being done, doesn't make sense unless we have the first step: primary health care, how it is going to be delivered and how that fit into restructuring.

1420

Now you've created yet another committee that is going to take this function unto itself and we're going to have to wait again, and meanwhile hospitals are closing. Minister, you don't have a plan. This is a mess. Why don't you just admit it and go back to the drawing board?

Hon Mr Wilson: For the first time in the history of this province we have a plan and a vision for health care. If the honourable member would stop the puffery in here and actually went and visited the alliance or the nurses or toured a hospital rather than being caged up here at Queen's Park, she would know that our partners out there agree with the plan and are very much part of the development of implementation plans across the province.

It's an exciting time. People are working together. We were out making an announcement in Peel today, several million dollars, \$11 million more for community-based care there, long-term care services, to recognize the growth and aging population in the 905 area, particularly Peel — yesterday, Mississauga — and all the providers in the room were very pleased with the approach the government is taking and the attitude out there is not the attitude of the honourable member. The attitude out there is, "Work together, pulling the oars in the same direction, and let's truly develop a patient-driven and patient-centred system." That is the vision of the Ministry of Health; that is the vision of our partners.

SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. Under the previous government it was identified that the septic system most commonly used in Kent and Essex counties did not conform with the design requirements of regulation 358 of the Environmental Protection Act. Since this situation came to light, on behalf of my constituents in Chatham and Kent I've been following the process very closely. Has there been any progress made in resolving this issue of partially raised-bed septic tanks?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): While to many members of this Legislature this is not an important issue, it is to people in the southwest part of Ontario. I would like to thank the member because of his concern over this.

There are about 1,500 of these particular systems in operation at this time, but back in 1995 as a result of a review of the part VIII program — that's the septic tanks program — we found these particular systems were not meeting the requirements of regulation 358. As a result, a study of the performance in Essex county has been completed by two divisions in my ministry and the Essex Regional Conservation Authority on the system. The purpose of this study was to evaluate how these beds function in terms of ensuring that they are not a risk to public health or the environment.

Mr Carroll: Now that the study's been completed, Minister, could you tell us, have you made a decision about the future viability of these evapobed septic systems?

Hon Mr Sterling: As intended, this ministry initiated the research study into these systems. The ministry has found that the cumulative effects of these evapobed

systems will harm the environment and risk surface water contamination. The ministry will not be approving the use of newly installed evapobeds. However, existing beds will be considered in compliance as long as they are functioning.

I am pleased to announce that we are modifying regulation 358 to allow the use of new technologies that are cost-competitive and will better protect the environment. These alternative technologies are intended to be used both on small and large lots. In the interim, before the passage of the regulation, which we are posting today, we will allow the alternative technologies to be used for smaller lots. The technical report —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I'd like to ask you about the deal that you have tentatively arrived at with the province's doctors. I just want to recap for you how you plunged this province into a year of anxiety and uncertainty. You went after the doctors, saying that they would have no liability coverage, that clawbacks would be larger, that caps would be smaller, that they couldn't have representation from the OMA. In this recent agreement, you've given up all those things. We went through a year of anxiety and hardship, of obstetricians not being available, of work actions, because you had to prove a point. That point today seems to be very minimal indeed, and the confidence of doctors you can't buy back.

You have put together a deal that apparently will cost us some \$500 million per annum. We want to know from you today, in explicit terms, how are you going to pay for this \$500 million per year? Is it going to come from additional closings of hospitals, from layoffs of nurses, or will you be delisting and making patients pay for the cost of your errors and the aggravation you've caused doctors over the past year?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): It will be no surprise to the honourable member that I disagree with the premise of his question. First of all, I don't know where he gets this huge figure for the cost of the agreement; I don't know on what basis you have been doing your research. But I will say that a number of things have been accomplished in both the interim agreement and this final agreement. I think we've brought stability to the profession in terms of income stability, and we've recognized something that the Ontario Medical Association on behalf of its members wanted recognized for many years, the growing and aging population, and that's what the 1.5% is.

We have a committee now to examine alternatives to the current malpractice insurance system. That's a huge, huge change in attitude and a huge step forward for both taxpayers and the Ontario Medical Association.

In the interim agreement, for the first time there's an agreement and a framework to deal with the underserved area problem by making sure that there is a disincentive for new graduates to go into overserved. That's historic and was well worth the blood, sweat and tears.

Mr Kennedy: I don't think there's an expectant mother in this province who had to go through the anxiety you artificially created, as you worked your way on to the dartboards of doctors across this province, who thinks it's worthwhile to come around again and provide to doctors virtually everything they were asking you to do over a year and a half ago. We're no further ahead, and people want to know how the quality of health care is going to be maintained.

In estimates for this year you have provided for \$239 million to pay for a deal that just in this next year is going to cost you at least \$400 million. Answer the question. You're the Minister of Health. You've decided to give more to doctors. You have to tell us where that is coming from. Table today what this deal in your estimation is really going to cost and how you're going to pay for it. Will you make patients pay for services that currently get paid for by the government, or will you hurt more hospitals and lay off more nurses to pay for this deal and your bumbling of the handling of doctors' affairs in this province?

Hon Mr Wilson: There is no money in this deal that would enhance the fees that doctors currently get. There is a possibility in the third year, if they find efficiencies in the schedule of benefits, to apply those savings, the same thing we're doing with hospitals and others.

Where there is money in this deal is 1.5% to recognize the growing and aging population. Is the honourable member suggesting that we should turn people away from doctors' offices and not deal with their health care needs? If the honourable member is suggesting that, then let him get up and put that on the table. I'd be happy to have that debate with you any time.

CARE HOMES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Your tenant ejection act beats up on the most vulnerable. People who live in care homes are the elderly, the sick and the disabled, yet section 93 of your bill gives landlords new ways to evict them. Tenants' advocates and many of their organizations that you have defunded say that by singling out people with illnesses or disabilities for special evictions you are violating section 15 of the Charter of Rights, which guarantees equal treatment under the law. I maintain that your bill goes out of its way to discriminate against the disabled and to throw them out on the street.

Will you amend your bill to ensure that people in care homes get the equal treatment they deserve?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I think that's rather a stretch of the act. What we've got in the act is something to ensure that people who are in care homes get the care they need. There comes a time, on occasion, where a resident of a care home may need additional care far beyond what is within the ability of the establishment to provide, so we have put legislation in place that says the care home must find other accommodation for that individual or go to community service groups to bring that service in. It's only when all of those alternatives have been exhausted that somebody could be moved out into a higher care facility.

1430

Mr Marchese: The relationship between an individual and the caregiver is a contractual one, a contract for service. It means that if more service is needed, the solution is not an eviction but rather to have the tenant agree with the caregiver as to the service that is needed.

Your answer doesn't solve that. You are, through section 93, not furthering the rights of the disabled by making it easier to evict them. Your bill has the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal making decisions about the adequacy of the levels of medical care, assuming that a complaint even gets there. That means the tribunal that's been hired because they know much about the cost to fix a parking garage or replace a roof will be making decisions about the levels of care people need.

Minister, this scares a lot of people. Will you amend your bill so that tenants, not the landlord and not the tribunal, make the decisions about the medical care —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Hon Al Leach: What we're doing with this legislation is trying to ensure that the rights of individuals in care homes are protected, just the opposite from what the member is saying. The last thing anybody in our society wants would be to see somebody who's in a care home and in an establishment that doesn't have the ability to provide the level of care that's necessary to provide the service to that individual.

Rather than just have the establishment make the decision, we've said you have to have an organization come in and evaluate that to make sure that if it's possible to have the care brought in from an outside service agency, then they would be required to do that. It's only after all those avenues have been exhausted that the tribunal would make a decision to move somebody into a higher level of care.

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. The official start to the tourist season is generally considered to be the Victoria Day weekend, which is this weekend.

In my riding of St Catharines-Brock, particularly in Niagara-on-the-Lake, it certainly is the highlight or the start of the tourism season, especially in Virgil. It starts off with the Virgil stampede, and we have a horse show and line dancing. My wife is involved in line dancing. On Monday night we have the giant fireworks display.

All those who are watching, be sure to come down to Niagara-on-the-Lake this weekend. We have 25,000 people coming this weekend. Certainly it starts off the tourism season. In addition, this time of year it's beautiful in Niagara-on-the-Lake with the blossoms.

Minister, could you —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much.

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I would imagine that the member really wanted an answer to a question about how the tourism industry is doing in Ontario. I'm happy to respond to his question.

I have to say that because of our government's attention to the tourism industry and the very good facilities we have in this province, we've had very good statistics on tourism. Overseas travel to Ontario rose by 8.8% in 1996 over 1995. I'm also happy to say that it has increased by 26% in the first two months of this year. Japanese tourists alone have accounted for 49% of that increase.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'm giving you the answer. I'm happy to say that these good statistics are very good for economic development and jobs in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It would be impossible to have a late show on that question.

Mr Froese: My question really was I wanted to know if the minister knew how to line dance.

As a result of all that activity that you just mentioned, Minister, could you tell us whether employment is on the rise?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'm delighted to answer that question. I'm happy to report that Ontario's international tourism deficit in dollar terms actually decreased by 2.1% in 1996 over 1995. Employment in tourism-related industries grew by 1.5% in 1996 and by 2.2% in the first two months of 1997. This is very good news. Accommodation occupancy increased by about 1.5% in 1996 over 1995 and occupancy grew by 2.2% for the two-month period in 1997.

I would like to encourage all Ontarians, as we approach the holiday weekend, to take advantage of the many tourism facilities we have in this province. I'm sure you'll find that they're second to none in the world. I encourage everybody to participate in Ontario tourism.

BUSINESS OCCUPANCY TAX

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): My question is to the Premier. Later on today we're going to be considering third and final reading of Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government. One of the perceived benefits of this bill is the removal of the business occupancy tax. That is supposed to be a great boon for business, when the actual fact is that the bank towers downtown will have a dramatic reduction of anywhere from \$3 million to \$5 million, whereas most small businesses will see an increase from about 30% to about 42%.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has raised this concern and says that most small businesses will see a price increase. Notwithstanding that, the Minister of Finance, in a quote of April 30, says, "This new system will allow cities to set different tax rates for small commercial properties." We have questioned officials at the ministry and they say there is no provision in this act to allow for a differentiation of taxes. Who is right, your minister or the officials in the ministry?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): You're into a technical area that I would defer to the minister when he comes back. But I would say this: The request to remove the business occupancy tax from business came first from CFIB. They felt it was unfair, and we agreed and have

taken it off. My understanding is that there is within the act the flexibility that the tax could be identical tomorrow as it is today or after it's implemented as it is today. I think that's what the minister has indicated. However, I will say this: The flexibility will be left to the municipalities, since it is a municipal tax, and that's where I think the onus and responsibility will lie.

1440

Mr Kwinter: There's no question that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business would love to see the tax removed. It is not being removed. It's just being reallocated and municipalities are going to have to recoup their revenue shortfall by apportioning it against small businesses.

There are no provisions in the act for any kind of different tax rates. This afternoon we're going to be addressing this bill. We're going to be asked to approve a bill that is effectively going to increase the taxes for the majority of small businesses. Is this what you see as a goal of the Common Sense Revolution?

Hon Mr Harris: As I indicated, the change was one what small business had asked for and lobbied for because they felt the business occupancy tax was unfair. I think they, and you, have pointed out that under the unfair tax system we inherited from you and the NDP an amendment would have to be made to allow municipalities to adjust tax burdens to promote fairness and satisfy certain local needs. That's why the minister and the government have announced that legislation will be introduced to enable municipalities to set lower tax rates on lower-valued commercial properties. I believe that has been the commitment of the minister.

I might say as well that I have a two-page briefing note here that explains it all, and I'd be happy to share it with the member.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. In northwestern Ontario the communities of Red Lake, Balmertown and Cochenour are suffering badly as a result of a labour dispute that has gone on now for 11 months at the Goldcorp mine. Your government has made it worse by allowing the company to use scabs; in this case, scabs from outside the province. In addition, what people in northwestern Ontario can't figure out is that this company continues to say they've got a rich gold deposit at the site but they seem to be in no hurry to reach a collective agreement with the workers and their union and bring the mine into full production.

Your government has helped the company here by allowing them to use scabs. Can you tell us what your government has done to safeguard the communities' interest, the public interest and the workers' interest in this situation?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Minister of Labour is not here today, but I can report that this government, as any government, as when you were in government, as when the Liberals were in government, is not about to interfere in labour relations. They are attempting to negotiate a contract. We have brought in

the most fair and balanced labour relations program to allow that to take place, which is why we've had fewer strikes than when you were in office. Quite frankly, I think it would be inappropriate during those negotiations for the government to take a position on one side or the other.

Mr Hampton: There are two issues here. On one issue you've really helped this company, Goldcorp. By changing the law to allow scabs, you made it possible for this company to bring in scabs from outside the province. You're threatening the communities involved, the workers involved, in fact the whole region. Workers have tried to get a collective agreement now for 11 months.

The second issue is this: The company keeps saying they've got a good gold deposit, but they show no interest in reaching a collective agreement. They show no interest, it seems, in bringing this mine into full production.

I ask you again, can you tell us what your government has done over the last year to safeguard the public interest, the communities' interest and those workers who live in those communities? Can you tell us what you've done?

Hon Mr Harris: The first thing we did, on June 8, 1995, was replace the most threatening government to jobs and growth and investment this province has ever seen. Since that time we have brought in a program of tax cuts, we have brought in a program of regulation, we have brought in a program of fairness, we've brought in a program of balance, we've brought in a program to deal with all the red tape you put out there in front of the businesses. We've brought an attitude that says when a company — a gold company, any company — wants to invest in this province, we're going to roll out the red carpet, not the red tape that you put in their face.

Never in the history of this province have we seen a government as anti-investment, anti-jobs, anti-growth as the New Democratic government, and the contrast of when we've ever seen a government more pro-growth or pro-investment as when this government took office in June 1995. That's what we've been doing since we threw you out of office.

HOUSING

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. One of the most important indicators for economic growth is the number of housing starts. Can you report to the House on the level of housing starts in the province of Ontario?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would like to thank the honourable member for Scarborough Centre for his question. I'm pleased to tell the House today that there is only good news for the housing sector in the province. I'd like to point out that there 55,900 housing starts in Ontario in the first quarter of 1997. That is a 53% increase from the same period of time over last year. Not only that, but private rental starts in urban areas increased by 29% compared to the first quarter of 1996. In addition, the Minister of Finance reported in last week's budget that Ontario home resales are up 17.3% for 1997 and new homes in the greater Toronto area are up a whopping —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr Newman: I want to thank the minister for that good news. My reason for asking the question was that, as I meet with constituents in my riding after the last budget and the budget of last week, so that's the last two years' budgets, many families, young families especially, are now buying homes for the first time. I think that's good news because many of them have said that they've been trapped in a cycle where they've not been able to purchase that first new home. I'd like to ask you, why are so many people buying homes for the first time and why are so many new homes being built in Ontario?

Hon Mr Leach: Again, I'd like to thank the member for Scarborough Centre the excellent question. There are a number of reasons to explain the flourishing home market. Taxpayers, for example, have been able to keep more money in their pockets to put towards a first home, thanks to the first instalments of this government's 30% income tax cut. That's number one.

Number two, the land transfer tax rebate for first-time buyers of new homes was extended another year in March by the Minister of Finance, and that means up to \$1,750 off the price of a house.

We've also reformed the Planning Act to make the approvals process more efficient and more cost-effective. This means less bureaucracy and less red tape, which translates into more affordable housing.

Also, with our proposed changes to the Development Charges Act, development charges will finally be brought under control. Lower development charges mean even more affordable housing.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise under 34(a) of our standing orders to indicate my dissatisfaction with an answer provided earlier today by the Minister of Health. I will be petitioning for the late show, at your pleasure.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): File the appropriate paperwork. It will be accommodated.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to request unanimous consent of the House to have an emergency debate on the following motion:

That in the opinion of this House, since persons with disabilities in Ontario face systemic barriers in access to employment, services, goods, facilities and accommodation; and

Since all Ontarians will benefit from the removal of these barriers, thereby enabling these persons to enjoy equal opportunity and full participation in the life of the province;

Therefore, the government of Ontario should keep its promise as set out in the letter from Michael D. Harris to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, dated May 24, 1995, to

(a) enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act within its current term of office; and

(b) work together with members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, in the development of such legislation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I have to read it.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Did the members of the government say no to this?

The Speaker: I don't know because I haven't read it yet.

The member for Beaches-Woodbine is seeking unanimous consent to debate:

That in the opinion of this House, since persons with disabilities in Ontario face systemic barriers in access to employment, services, goods, facilities and accommodation; and

Since all Ontarians will benefit by the removal of these barriers, thereby enabling these persons to enjoy equal opportunity and full participation in the life of the province;

Therefore, the government of Ontario should keep its promise as set out in the letter from Michael D. Harris to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee dated May 24, 1995, to:

(a) enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act within its current term of office; and

(b) work together with members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, in the development of such legislation.

Agreed? I heard a no.

1450

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I move that Mr Ford and Mr Froese exchange places in order of precedence for private members' public business and that notwithstanding standing order 96(h) the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item number 82.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital;

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

FIRE SAFETY

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Cochrane North.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Cochrane South, Mr Speaker.

I have a petition here signed by hundreds of people from the community of Timmins and area in regard to Bill 84, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to the professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

It's signed by a number of citizens including Robert Gerbasi and Claudette Giroux. I sign that petition.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I have a petition here from OPSEU Local 229 in Brampton and I submit it herewith to the Clerk.

VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax does not recognize the uniqueness of the north; and

"Whereas Mike Harris should know that gas prices are higher in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax is blatantly unfair to the north; and

"Whereas we have no voice for the north, fighting for northerners around the cabinet table;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to revoke the new tax imposed on the north and convince the Tory government to understand that northern Ontario residents do not want the new Mike Harris vehicle registration tax."

Of course I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Member for Cochrane North, I mean Cochrane South.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): You're the second Speaker to do that today.

I can hear that petition, the former one, coming to the Legislature quickly from Cochrane South. But I do have another petition, namely, one dealing with the following.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services;...

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and failure to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response poses a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence against the government" of Michael Harris.

I sign that petition.

BIRTH CONTROL

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I have a petition signed by many people in the Hamilton-Wentworth area and it reads:

"The provincial government has stated it will soon require municipalities to fund 100% of birth control and sexual health centres throughout the province.

"We, the undersigned, demand that the provincial government maintain 100% of its funding for birth control and sexual health centres."

I present it to the Clerk.

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition which concerns the current child care crisis in Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Tory government has decided to replace our current child care system with one that lacks compassion and common sense and is fraught with many dangerous consequences; and

"Whereas the concept of affordable, accessible and quality child care is a basic, important, fundamental right for many members of our community who are either unemployed and enrolled into a training program or are working single parents or where both parents are working; and

"Whereas if our present provincial government is sincere in getting people back to work, they should recognize the value of the child care component of the Jobs Ontario program and acknowledge the validity of the wage subsidy to the child care workers,

"We, therefore, the undersigned residents, business owners and child care workers of our Parkdale and High Park communities urge the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario to immediately suspend their plans to implement cuts to our present child care programs across our province, and restore funding to their previous levels."

I've signed my signature to it.

FIRE SAFETY

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which states:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I'm proud to affix my signature.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have more petitions concerning gun control.

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking and the ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic of illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the streets and involve them in bureaucracy other than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

I affix my signature to this.

ADULT EDUCATION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a petition to support full funding for adult students in daytime secondary programs.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislature to the following:

"Whereas the Ontario government in November 1995 decreed that the funding for adult students in daytime full-credit high school programs would be cut by almost 70%; and

"Whereas since that decision has taken effect many of these adult programs have been completely cut or severely reduced, thus denying many residents the right to a full education and access to work-related courses;

"Therefore, we call upon the Legislative Assembly to restore full funding to these programs."

This is signed by hundreds of people affected and others wise enough to know the impact on society. I emphatically add my signature to theirs.

1500

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned about the plight confronting the 17% of Ontario's population who have physical or mental disabilities. People with disabilities face tremendous barriers which all too frequently exclude them from being able to fully participate in the mainstream of Ontario society. Existing barriers make things very bad. The new barriers now being unnecessarily created make things even worse.

"We know that during the 1995 election, Mike Harris promised in writing that if elected, his government would do three things to address this serious problem. First, he would enact the Ontarians with Disabilities Act in his first term. Second, he would work together with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee to develop this law. The committee is a broad-based Ontario-wide coalition of individuals and community organizations who support the enactment of a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act to achieve a barrier-free society for persons with disabilities by the year 2000. Third, he promised to devote new resources to accommodating the needs of persons with disabilities.

"We also know that Premier Harris has failed to keep any of these promises, and has made things worse by cutting funding to important areas for persons with disabilities such as paratransit services and the Ontario Human Rights Commission, despite election promises not to do this;

"We therefore petition the Legislature to take the following immediate steps:

"(1) Require that Premier Harris stop refusing to even meet with representatives of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, with whom he gave a solemn election promise to work together;

"(2) Require Premier Harris to forthwith publicly announce the date by which the Ontarians with Disabilities Act will be introduced into the Legislature for debate and passage;

"(3) Require the Minister of Citizenship to forthwith undertake a full and fair process of public consultations on the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, leading to its timely development, introduction and passage into law; and

"(4) Require the Premier and the government to reverse those budget cuts which have made it even harder for persons with disabilities to overcome the barriers which impede their full participation in Ontario society."

This is signed by a number of people who were here at the Legislature today attempting to meet with the government, and I am proud to add my signature.

SALE OF AMMUNITION

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have another set of petitions from legal owners and users of firearms who are concerned about ammunition regulations.

"Whereas the NDP government under former Premier Bob Rae passed legislation, Bill 181, the Ammunition Regulation Act, placing restrictions on the sale of ammunition in Ontario; and

"Whereas the provisions contained in Bill 181 are time-consuming, onerous and create unnecessary red tape; and

"Whereas the records for which these provisions have been produced do not track criminals; and

"Whereas Bill 181 was passed in only one day, without any discussion with law-abiding gun owners such as farmers, collectors, hunters and recreational shooters, who understand and have a deep respect for the power of firearms and ammunition and the need to maintain and use their equipment in the safest of conditions; and

"Whereas Bill 181 will do nothing to combat the use of illegal ammunition;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal Bill 181, protect the rights of responsible firearms owners and work for tougher penalties against weapons offences."

I sign and support this petition.

VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It says:

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax does not recognize the uniqueness of the north; and

"Whereas Mike Harris should know that gas prices are higher in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax is blatantly unfair to the north; and

"Whereas we have no voice for the north fighting for northerners around the cabinet table;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to revoke the new tax imposed on the north and convince the Tory government to understand that indeed northern Ontario residents do not want the new Mike Harris vehicle registration tax."

I've affixed my signature in support of this petition.

RENT REGULATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government has brought forward Bill 96, legislation which will effectively kill rent control in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Conservative campaign literature during the York South by-election stated that rent control will continue; and

"Whereas tenant groups, students and seniors have pointed out that this legislation will hurt those that can least afford it, as it will cause higher rents across most markets in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Conservative proposal will reduce the stock of affordable housing and encourage landlords to harass long-term residents, pushing them to move out so new tenants paying higher rents can be brought in; and

"Whereas this Conservative proposal will make it easier for residents to be evicted from retirement care homes; and

"Whereas the Liberal caucus continues to believe that all tenants, and particularly the vulnerable in our society who live on fixed incomes, deserve the assurance of a maximum rent cap;

"We, the undersigned, demand that the Conservative government scrap its proposal to abandon and eliminate rent control and to introduce legislation which will protect tenants in the province of Ontario."

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): On the one-year anniversary of the unanimous passage of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act resolution and the two-year anniversary of the Premier promising to put this act into place, I'm very pleased on behalf of my constituents to read this petition, and on behalf of my colleague from Hamilton East, Mr Agostino, as well.

"We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned about the plight confronting 17% of Ontario's population who have physical or mental disabilities. People with disabilities face tremendous barriers which all too frequently exclude them from being able to fully participate in the mainstream of Ontario society. Existing barriers make things very bad. The new barriers now being unnecessarily created make things even worse.

"We know that during the 1995 election, Mike Harris promised in writing that if elected, his government would do three things to address this serious problem. First, he would enact the Ontarians with Disabilities Act in his first term. Second, he would work together with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee to develop this law. The committee is a broad-based Ontario-wide coalition of individuals and community organizations who support the enactment of a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act to achieve a barrier-free society for persons with disabilities by the year 2000. Third, he promised to devote new resources to accommodating the needs of persons with disabilities.

"We also know that Premier Harris has failed to keep any of these promises, and has made things worse by cutting funding to important areas for persons with disabilities such as paratransit services and the Ontario Human Rights Commission, despite elections promises not to do this.

"We therefore petition the Legislature to take the following immediate steps:

"(1) Require that Premier Harris stop refusing to even meet with representatives of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, with whom he gave a solemn election promise to work together;

"(2) Require Premier Harris to forthwith publicly announce the date by which the Ontarians with Disabilities Act will be introduced into the Legislature for debate and passage;

"(3) Require the Minister of Citizenship to forthwith undertake a full and fair process of public consultations on the Ontarians with Disabilities Act leading to its timely development, introduction and passage into law; and

"(4) Require the Premier and the government to reverse those budget cuts which have made it even harder

for persons with disabilities to overcome the barriers which impede their full participation in Ontario society."

I'm very proud to sign my name to that petition.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): Pursuant to standing order 60(a), I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates, on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Pursuant to standing order 59, your committee has selected the estimates 1997-98 of the following ministries and offices for consideration:

Ministry of Health: 12 hours 30 minutes —

Interjection: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Dispense? Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 60(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TARTAN ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE TARTAN

Mrs Ross moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to adopt an official tartan for Ontario / Projet de loi 132, Loi visant à adopter un tartan officiel pour l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Do you wish to make any statement?

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I certainly hope the members of this Legislature will look at this bill positively. I look forward to the debate on June 5, where hopefully we'll have a tartan for this province.

1510

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR MUNICIPAL FINANCE ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE FINANCEMENT ÉQUITABLE DES MUNICIPALITÉS

Ms Bassett, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government / Projet de loi 106, Loi concernant le financement des administrations locales.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent at this point in terms

of how to deal with the time this afternoon. I seek unanimous consent to divide the time remaining following the remarks of the member for St Andrew-St Patrick until 6 o'clock equally between the two opposition parties, and that the Speaker put the question on the third reading of Bill 106 at 6 o'clock today, and that a recorded division be deemed required and deferred until Monday, May 26, 1997, immediately following question period.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it agreed? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Sudbury has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines concerning vehicle registration.

Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Cochrane South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Attorney General concerning French-language services and provincial offences of some sort.

Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Renfrew North has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question by the Minister of Health concerning overstated savings out of closing hospitals.

These matters will be debated today at 6 pm.

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on Bill 106. I want to thank everyone who appeared before the standing committee on finance and economic affairs during the public consultations which were held right across the province. I would also like to thank everyone who submitted written proposals on this bill. Based on this input, we have made some important amendments to Bill 106.

Ontarians told us, for example, that they wanted a property tax system that is fair. They told us they want businesses to be able to compete on a level playing field. This government has taken up the challenge of fixing a system that is out of date, confusing and unfair.

Under Bill 106, residents and businesses who have been paying more than their fair share will see their taxes reduced. Bill 106 will establish the Ontario fair assessment system, which will be based on current value; it will ensure annual updates of properties' assessed values; it will make the property tax system fairer and easier for taxpayers to understand; it will cut property tax for farmers and for woodlot owners; it will exempt conservation lands from property tax; it will eliminate the outdated business occupancy tax; it will simplify the process for assessment appeals; it will cut red tape and reduce the administrative burden for municipalities; it will give municipalities a new range of powers, choices and options to collect tax revenue in ways that best fit their local priorities. This is something we've heard again and again.

During the hearings the finance committee heard presentations expressing concern that the existing protection for low-income seniors and low-income disabled homeowners from tax shifts was not adequate. Many presenters felt that if these provisions were not mandatory there would be inequities. We listened to their concerns and we responded.

The amendment we have introduced to Bill 106 requires that municipalities provide a deferral, cancella-

tion or other relief regarding assessment-related tax increases for low-income seniors and low-income disabled homeowners and their spouses. We believe this amendment, and the option to allow municipalities up to eight years to phase in tax changes, strengthens the existing protection under Bill 106.

When the finance committee travelled to the Niagara region, the committee heard from a number of people that the wine industry, an asset in this province, would need special assessment protection. In its amended form Bill 106 introduces an amendment to ensure that our world-class wineries are treated fairly. Estate wineries will be recognized as an extension of farming operations, ensuring greater fairness in the tax treatment of small estate wineries in the Niagara region.

I want to thank MPPs Tim Hudak, the member for Niagara South; Tom Froese, the member for St Catharines-Brock; Frank Sheehan, the MPP for Lincoln; and Bart Maves, the MPP for Niagara Falls for their important input on this issue. It allowed us to better understand the concerns of the people in the area. Linda Franklin and the Wine Council of Ontario have also endorsed this amendment.

These are just two of the key amendments we have introduced for Bill 106. We feel they're extremely important. The government believes Bill 106 creates a fair and consistent property tax system in Ontario. We have listened to all Ontarians. We know the property tax and property assessment system proposed under Bill 106 will help create a more prosperous and equitable Ontario for future generations.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I was going to get up on a point of order earlier because I'm sure there has been some great mistake made about this whole matter. I'm sure the member doesn't realize that she is really talking about a bill that is going to impose market value assessment on Ontario.

I'm reading here from a pamphlet that was handed out during the election last year — and it's by one Isabel Bassett, who ran as the candidate in St Andrew-St Patrick — and she stated therein: "The policy of the PC Party has always been that we will never" — and "never" is underlined — "impose market value assessment on Toronto. We remain firm in that position."

There was also another piece of paper, which I guess went to all the residents in her riding, dated June 2, 1995, that says, "My party and I will never support the imposition of MVA in Metro Toronto."

We've already had an admission in this House that the actual value assessment, which they call this new system, is one and the same as market value assessment. I believe the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who is in the House currently, admitted that one day, as did the Premier. I don't know what happened between June 2, 1995, when this information went out and was distributed to the people of her riding, to the effect that MVA would not be imposed, and now, when it's being imposed on everyone.

I wouldn't want to call this a lie, I would not want to do that, but certainly some people would. Certainly some people would get a totally different impression —

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Take your seat. You were on the eve of making a mistake, but you made the mistake. I would ask you to withdraw that word "lie."

Mr Gerretsen: I withdraw the word "lie." Let's just put it this way: What she's saying today and what she said in her campaign literature are not one and the same.

The Deputy Speaker: That's it. Your time is over. Further questions and comments?

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I want to thank you, Mr Speaker, and I wish to voice appreciation to the member for St Andrew-St Patrick for having the courage, because this was a difficult task indeed. With respect, colleague, you stood well. You were at your post at every session. It was difficult by virtue of having dozens and dozens of presenters saying that the sky is about to fall under 106. This is the last straw. This is when people are to get it big time if they're at the residential level. Small business people will see their taxes skyrocket. They will be punished by virtue of the sanction of the government. 1520

On the other side, there shall be winners. The bank towers will win big time, at the expense of the bakeshop. But when I follow the Minister of Finance's career, and I've been doing so for 12 years, and when I project it after he leaves here, am I more likely to find the Minister of Finance working in a bank tower or in a bakeshop? I think the answer is quite clear, and he won't mind me saying this: He is predestined to join the ranks of the most fortunate. I don't wish to impute motive.

I agree with my colleague. Although I am not one to use the word "lie," sometimes people will take advantage and shy away from the truth because it is more expedient. This is reflected throughout Bill 106, a simple case of deliberate, systematic downloading to the municipalities.

Make no mistake about it. We presented more than 20 amendments. They wouldn't accept one of them because we're New Democrats and that horde —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a real pleasure to get up and speak in support of Bill 106 but, more importantly, the member for St Andrew-St Patrick. She brings such grace and such loyalty and such colour to this government. Also, to the always well-dressed member for Lake Nipigon, his comments couldn't be further from the truth. He's dressed more for the banker than the baker.

We know that the property tax and property assessment system proposed under Bill 106 will create a more prosperous and equitable Ontario for every generation, for generations to come. We know that this has been long debated in this House. Both parties on the opposite side of the House have talked about it but they failed to do anything.

Interjection: They're all for the status quo.

Mr O'Toole: They're status quo. It's all about fairness. It's about fairness of assessment and it's for paying your fair share. It's a fair and reasonable approach, as our ministers are famed to say. The current value system is exactly that: It's with the current use of the property.

More importantly in my riding of Durham East, the way we've dealt with the outdated method of taxing agricultural operations, the way we've treated it so sensi-

tively in this bill with the whole wine industry in the Niagara region, shows that we are responsive to the people of Ontario by renewing the whole assessment system.

It's my understanding from listening to the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and other experts in this area that we can expect the taxes to go down. Unlike the member for Lake Nipigon, elected people recognize that we've hit the tax wall in Ontario. There's no more tax money left. Our municipal leaders certainly won't be increasing taxes.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I was just reading the literature of the member, The PC Alternative on Taxation. It says: "The policy of the PC Party has always been that we will never impose market value assessment on Toronto. We remain firm in that position."

This is Isabel Bassett on here, who was a candidate. "For help, call 928-2300." I find it ironic that they're forcing the same person to stand up this afternoon and push through this bill that does exactly what the member said she wouldn't do during the election campaign. I'm shocked by that.

Second, I'm always interested in what the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has to say about these matters. Judith Andrew, director of provincial policy, says:

"Ironically, it is likely that the elimination of the business occupancy tax will harm our sector. Smaller firms are concentrated at the low end of the 25% to 75% range of this archaic tax. If municipalities opt to recoup the amount on the business tax base, an average 40% rate would see most small businesses paying more. At this juncture, we would urgently request an opportunity to amplify on these concerns."

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business is concerned. They say you have these huge bank towers out there in downtown Toronto, the very wealthiest and richest and the companies making the most profit. They're going to get a decrease, and because of course the municipalities are going to be forced to raise municipal taxes because of the downloading of the Harris Conservative government, we're going to have small businesses worse off under this.

I thought this government was going to do something for small business. It's time they did.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for St Andrew-St Patrick.

Ms Bassett: I'd like to reply to the gracious members for Lake Nipigon, Kingston and the Islands and St Catharines and point out that you're trying to suck me in to arguing forever about MVA, AVA and CVA. I'm not going to be pulled down to talk about that. You're trying to get off the topic, which is that each one of your governments had a plan in place to bring in a new assessment system. Call it what you will, with variations that we've improved on, it's a form of assessment that is fairer, that is up to date and that is going to get rid of the inequities in a system that taxes mansions in Rosedale at a rate that is far less than smaller houses in Scarborough or elsewhere.

How my colleagues on the opposite side of the House could argue that this is a fairer system — somebody like Mr Marchese would be screaming about it if he were in

that small house, paying much more than somebody in Rosedale. From that point of view this system is going to be much fairer.

As for what my friend from St Catharines pointed out about the inequities regarding the business occupancy tax, again a tax that was brought in in 1904, surely he couldn't be advocating that it should remain. The minister has said again and again that in the subsequent legislation this summer he is going to allow municipalities to deal with that system by bringing in two tax rates for the commercial class, allowing municipalities to tax businesses that need it and that are wealthier more than the small bakeries that everybody seems to be standing up for.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I appreciate the chance to join the debate. I'm not trying to suck anybody into joining the debate. I know how you got elected, Ms Bassett, and I know how Mr Leach got elected.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Hard work.

Mr Phillips: Well, hard work. Here's Al Leach, just so you all know. The way he got elected was by saying, "My party and I will never support the imposition of MVA in Metro Toronto."

Hon Mr Leach: We never will.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has the floor.

Mr Phillips: Just so people watching understand, the minister, Mr Leach, is barking over here. It was he who promised you he would never introduce market value assessment. We've had the officials confirm this is market value assessment.

I don't want to get into a big debate about whether it's right or wrong. The fact is it's market value assessment. As they said, if you take a microscope and you do some DNA testing on it, there may be that much difference between this and market value assessment, but that's all. It's market value assessment.

I'm just saying to you, you got elected promising one thing and now you're doing something different. At the very least, you owe the people of your riding an apology. Just say: "Listen, I'm sorry. I misled you. I decided that we're going to do it anyway. I got elected on that basis, but we're going to impose it."

The Deputy Speaker: I don't think you can say that the minister said that. I would ask you to withdraw "misled."

Mr Phillips: I withdraw, then. I would just say that the brochure signed by Mr Leach said, "My party and I will never support the imposition of MVA in Metro Toronto," and I'll leave it to the public to make their own determination.

Let me talk a little about the concerns in the bill. There's nobody in the province who doesn't agree that there is a need for change, nobody; everybody agrees with that. That's not the issue. The issue very simply is, does this bill work?

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Again the member from Etobicoke is barking. I will say to him and to the residents, who are probably wondering who he is, that every once in a while he wakes up and starts to bark. He's barking because I'm not sure he understands the bill.

I see my friends from the board of trade and the chamber of commerce are here, and I'm glad they're here. I would say this about the business occupancy tax. First, you are taking \$1.6 billion off the business property tax — the business occupancy tax is coming off — and it is being added back on to the realty tax. When we went over the numbers, there is no question that there are going to be dramatic changes in property taxes. It is true.

The big bank towers are going to see a dramatic decrease. The banks are fine organizations; they're essential to the future of our country and they do a terrific job in Metro Toronto. I have a son who works in the banks. He says, "Be careful, Dad, that you don't bash the banks." I'm not. I'm just stating a fact. Banks, the big towers, are going to pay substantially less and small business substantially more. That is indisputable and every businessperson in Ontario recognizes that. Every municipality is going to recoup the lost business occupancy tax by putting it on the realty tax.

The thing that really surprised me is that the Minister of Finance said, in the paper, "Well, this new system will allow cities to set different tax rates for small commercial properties" — in other words, that the bill permits a different tax rate for small businesses. The bill doesn't; it does not do that. I can only draw one of two conclusions: Either the minister does not know what is in the bill, or he was confused or something else.

The point is this: The bill that we are going to be approving, voting on — the debate is over at the end of the day, in a matter of three hours — will dramatically increase property tax on small business. Now, we've heard today that the government plans to bring in more legislation, we don't know when. It needs, demands more legislation to fix the bill, but you're going to ask us to approve the bill without ever seeing that legislation?

I would say this: I am anxious to see your definition of "small business." Every business group — the chamber, the board of trade, the CFIB, all the business groups — said to us that they don't like the idea of two different levels of taxation on business, because how will you define it? Will it be square footage? Will it be dollar sales? What will it be? You want us to approve this bill when a key part of the bill, an absolutely essential part of the bill, is not even in the bill. We have not even seen the legislation on it. When people ask me, "Why is the Liberal Party voting against the bill?" I say, "Listen, we want property tax change, but if you rely on this government to put together a bill that works, you have unfounded faith."

This bill, I guarantee you, will create chaos in the province of Ontario a year from now. I'm anxious to get that on the record. We've said that all along, and I will tell you a year from now when it does create chaos, first because of the business occupancy tax.

The second chaos it will create is with our rural municipalities. We proposed an amendment, and I will add that the NDP proposed a very similar amendment as

well, saying that the province has an obligation to reimburse the municipalities for the \$170 million of revenue they are going to lose. For the people of Ontario, what's happened here is that the province has said: "We are eliminating our program of the farm tax rebate. We are going to make the municipalities now pay for that." The province simply said: "We're going to cancel a program where we're spending \$170 million. It's gone."

The province pockets \$170 million for its tax cut for the wealthy, but who's going to pay for it? It will be the rural municipalities. As a matter of fact, AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, argues strenuously that this bill shouldn't permit lower taxes for our farm communities. We think there is a different solution, and we propose that the province reimburse the rural municipalities for the \$170 million of lost tax revenue. The government, for whatever reason, voted it down. I would say to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, we listened to you and we tried to get this bill changed so it would take away the pain that rural municipalities are going to feel. That's the second reason this bill is faulty and will create chaos.

The third reason is that we now have perhaps the most confusing plan for property taxes you can imagine, and I'll go through it. The province has decided that 100% of the cost of education that is currently borne by the commercial and industrial sector will continue to be borne by the commercial and industrial sector. Over half the property taxes our business community pays go to education, and I think they were expecting that this bill would somehow provide relief; it doesn't. The province is going to insist that 100% of the current spending on education continue for the business community.

For all my business friends out there and all the business community, be aware that this bill leaves education 100% on the commercial-industrial taxpayer. The unanswered question is, is it going to be a uniform mill rate, or are they simply going to say, "Provide the same pot of money"? We've now got the confusion of that.

For the first time ever, the province has moved in and will be setting property tax rates for our business sector. Over half of the business property taxes are now being set by the province. That's an extraordinary intrusion on the property tax base, one I'm surprised the business community — many of whom I can recall saying that they like dealing with their local council because they're close to them and feel they have some opportunity to influence policy. The business community should recognize that you can no longer influence the education cost on your property tax; over half your property tax is education, and the province will tell you how much you pay for that.

On the residential side it's equally confusing. Again, right now over half the property tax that residences pay is paid to education. The local school board sets the mill rate and it goes to fund the local school costs. Now the province, in a convoluted manoeuvre — and I will say it was to try to bail Minister Leach out of his mess that he got the government into on the downloading.

Originally Minister Leach said, "We're going to take education off property tax." In fact, the government was all around the province saying: "This is the central idea.

We're going to take education off the residential property tax. It doesn't belong there" — all of those things. But then they found that Minister Leach had made a huge error, a mistake, and they had to back off from it. But now what we've got is that the province is going to set property tax mill rates on residential property for the education portion.

People in Ontario have been told — I remember that Mike Harris spent tax dollars, and it was all tax dollars, your hard-earned tax dollars, on running those ads. Do you remember? He was in the basement and he had the wires going every which way, with the sparking? He was going to straighten the wires out. Well, we've now found the wires — he was down there. They blew a fuse and he's putting the wires back together, but it is the most tangled mess.

1540

I'll go through it again on education. The province is now setting the mill rate for residential property taxes on education. The province is setting the mill rate for businesses on education, for the first time ever. It's like a vacuum cleaner sucking up property tax dollars. A third of the property taxes in Ontario now will be controlled by the province. So the third thing to be aware of in this bill is this massive intrusion by the province against property tax. There is a long history of property taxes being used for local activities. Now — can you imagine? — a third of your property tax will be set by the province. That's the third part of this bill that causes concern.

The fourth is the assessment process itself. Right now, going around the province, the government has outsourced or gone to the private sector for a bunch of the assessments to be done. We are told by professional assessors that it is a mess. We were told by virtually all the municipalities. They were saying: "Listen, this thing is out of control. We are heading for a mess." The government, for whatever reason, has started late on this, doesn't know exactly what it's doing on this, and the assessment process is in chaos. We've met with the financial officials of the municipalities who have been sending up real signals of concern about the process and about the fact that they will not be getting the assessment rolls on time. They will be sending out interim tax bills, and when the final tax bill comes out, it will be dramatically different.

It is important that we alert the people of Ontario to the fourth concern, and that is that the process is in chaos. Not surprising. It's a government that creates chaos. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Education said it's a healthy thing. "Create a crisis." Well, this is a crisis created by the government. For our municipalities trying to cope with this — because it will be them that will face the phone calls come next spring. Mark my words, there will be dramatic changes in property taxes beyond what anyone could contemplate. I've gone through what's going to happen in the business sector. So our fourth concern is your asking us to approve a bill that we've been told by the professionals, people who know the assessment process, is headed for chaos. I don't want my name on that. I want change and I want it orderly, but I don't want my name on that.

Mr Pouliot: We told them so.

Mr Phillips: And we told them so.

The fifth concern we have about the bill, and it cannot be ignored in this process, is that the government has decided to fund a big part of the tax cut by offloading, by dumping huge costs on to the municipalities.

We saw today one of the most interesting things I've seen. The city of North York is now planning to have a tax on liquor, a North York tax when you go in and buy liquor. Believe me, that's only the start. My municipality has had to add a whole bunch of new taxes on services it never taxed before.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): They've got to find the money somewhere.

Mr Phillips: They've got to find the money somewhere, as my colleague says.

Why are the municipalities doing this? This is what we've been saying for some time. We understand the tax cut. It benefits the best off. I keep saying this. People making a quarter of a million dollars in this province are going to get a \$500-million tax break. They're going to get \$500 million of tax break.

Mr Gerretsen: That's a lot of money.

Mr Phillips: "It's a lot of money," my colleagues say. What is happening as a result of that? You can see what North York is having to do: put taxes on things. My municipality is putting new taxes on all sorts of things to try and maintain some level of services. Then what we found was that Mike Harris announced a deal with some members of the municipalities.

I really worry about this because it is clear that the government is dumping \$660 million of brand-new costs on to municipalities, including, I might add, 100% of social housing. I remind us that a majority of social housing is for seniors in this province, for the people who have built this province and have a right to expect that in their senior years they can live in some form of dignity.

They have supported the community that went ahead of them and now they expect the rest of us to provide some decent support for them. The province has decided to put 100% of that cost on to property tax. I guarantee you, the first economic downturn, our municipalities are going to face the most awful moral decisions, trying to decide: "Do we cut back on our police force, our fire force? Do we cut back on housing for our seniors?"

Why is it all being done? It's being done to fund this tax cut; \$660 million added, dumped on to municipalities. That alone is a 5% increase in property tax. The ultimate insult in my opinion — by the way, I understand that 14 or 15 handpicked municipal politicians, I gather, agreed to this, but I don't know where the rest of the municipal politicians are. They have to speak out on this on behalf of their residents. They can't allow \$660 million of provincial responsibility to be dumped on to property taxpayers and expect that is something they should endorse. They should be loudly speaking out against that. I think in the weeks and months ahead we'll hear increasingly from the municipalities and our municipal leaders how irresponsible this is.

I congratulate organizations like the board of trade that have led the way in showing the government that it was dead wrong on this. The public may be aware that when the government announced this nonsense, we said, "It's

wrong; \$1 billion you're putting on to property tax." Mike Harris said: "No, no. You're all wet." Finally the municipalities, the board of trade, the United Way and the Who Does What, David Crombie's group, beat them up so badly they had to admit they made a big mistake. They backed off, but they only backed off partially; \$660 million put on to property tax.

Some of our most sensitive services are going on to the property tax: housing, seniors' housing, 100% of our ambulance service paid for from property tax, 100% of our public health paid for from property tax, almost \$1 billion of social assistance put on to property tax.

You can see why North York is putting a new tax on liquor. You want to see the tax increases from Mike Harris, the Taxfighter? Mike Harris simply pushed the taxes off to some other place. The North York council is imposing new taxes. I will say once again, for our students, that they're going to pay the price. The tuition fee of the MBA program at Western, my old Alma Mater, has gone from \$3,000 a year to \$18,000 a year.

Hon Mr Leach: That's in 40 years.

Mr Phillips: He says it's in four years.

Mr Gerretsen: No, he said 40 years.

1550

Mr Phillips: There again we have a cabinet minister who doesn't know that out there right now students are facing tuition fees going from \$3,000 a year to \$18,000 a year; \$3,000 this year, and in four years it will be the \$18,000, and going higher. That's not the end of it.

The point of that is, who is paying the price for the tax cut? It clearly is the students. It clearly is our seniors who now will find that their future is dependent on the property tax. It clearly is our seniors, who were promised that there would be no user fees on drugs, and again found that they've all faced dramatic user fees on drugs.

The fifth area of concern for us in this property tax bill is that there is, at the same time as this is happening, a dramatic downloading going on. I will just tell you one of the most poignant was the day after the budget came out, May 7. Here was the advertisement in one of our local Toronto papers: "Concerned Seniors Pay Property Tax the Easy Way: With the threat of megacity comes the possibility of increased property taxes. This will affect everyone, but hardest hit will be seniors."

It goes on to say they've got a solution and it's the one proposed by Mr Ford, one of the Conservative members. He no sooner had proposed this than about two weeks later we saw the ad. It's a business now. It's the old reverse mortgage. Seniors out there, all you do is you pay your property tax with a reverse mortgage and then — this is frankly the cruellest of it perhaps — this leaves "the homeowner to enjoy the full benefits during their lifetime, knowing that it does not require repayment until they die."

My point is this: You can now see that the combination of the downloading and the business occupancy tax is going to result in some significant tax increases.

The sixth point of concern in the bill is that there are significant payments in lieu of. They are payments made by the federal government and the provincial government, Mr Speaker. You will know that from your Ottawa experience, where there are significant moneys paid by

the federal government to the local municipalities. I think it's also true in Kingston, if I'm not mistaken, and some other jurisdictions.

Municipalities were, and are, extremely worried that this bill makes no mention of that. They're worried that the province now is going to move in, scoop that up and they will not have access to it. Again, we moved an amendment that said, "Listen, surely the appropriate thing to do here is to assure municipalities that it isn't the plan of the province to scoop that money up," and we moved an amendment that said current payments in lieu of will stay in place. The government members, for whatever reason, simply voted it down. My colleague from the NDP said we had 20 amendments between the two of us, every one of them summarily voted down. Each of them I think would have strengthened the bill. So that's our seventh concern on the bill.

The eighth concern is — I don't want to get into a semantics argument here, but let's be honest with the people — that this is market value assessment. In fact, when the officials went around the province, they said: "Listen, there's no change. If you've been on market value assessment, you're still on market value assessment. You'll see no change. There's nothing here that's going to change." One of my colleagues is very familiar with the definition of "market value." My colleague Mr Kwinter taught the course in real estate before he came here, and he said: "Listen, I can guarantee you the definition in this bill is exactly the same as the definition that's been used on market value assessment. This is market value assessment."

Let's not play games with people. That's why I say to my colleagues Mr Leach from St George-St David and Ms Bassett from St Andrew-St Patrick they should just say: "We were wrong. We are going to impose market value assessment, and I'm sorry. I'm sorry that my literature said I would never support it and I am supporting it now, and I'm sorry the policy has been that we will never impose market value assessment."

I might add another thing. "Mike Harris will relieve pressure on property tax by stopping the downloading on municipalities." The downloading has turned into a steady stream of major-sized trucks dumping on municipalities.

Mr Marchese: It's a waterfall of horrors.

Mr Phillips: That's appropriate; a waterfall of dumping.

All this is by way of saying that everybody in the province is in favour of property tax change. Historically, the policy of previous governments was, "We'll let the municipality make the decision on whether to bring in market value assessment." That was a legitimate policy if you believe in local autonomy; if you think that municipalities are responsible, as we certainly do; if you think that locally elected people are every bit as competent as provincially elected people, and I certainly do. There's no difference. We just happened to have run for a different office.

The policy of previous governments, of the Bill Davis government, was, "We'll let municipalities make the decision whether they want to impose market value assessment," but I gather the new government has said: "No, no. This is going to be mandated by the govern-

ment. Mike Harris knows best, and we're going to impose the same system right across the province, and we don't care what municipalities say." I can accept that, but that doesn't mean we have to accept an incompetent bill.

I just comment on the points I've gone through. One, the business occupancy tax: You owe it to Ontario to have proposed and shown us how you are going to deal with the problems of small business, and you won't show us that, you won't show the business community that. You just simply say, "We'll bring in another bill." Flags should go up around the province. You've mishandled the farm rebate program. You've pocketed \$170 million, and now the cost has gone on to the municipalities, and you are inviting conflict between our rural municipalities and our farm communities that we could have avoided with one little amendment if you had voted for it.

You are downloading at the same time as this. For the first time ever the province now is setting the mill rate on residential education and on commercial education; a third of property tax now is set by the province. It's unheard of. We are telling you that the professionals are saying the assessment process is flawed. You are going to have significant problems a year from now.

The reverse mortgage that you seem to want is, frankly, for many of our seniors an insult. They have spent their lives paying off their homes, trying to live without debt, and this is just another form of debt. You're essentially forcing them to put a reverse mortgage on, and by the way they will be paying a far higher interest rate on this than they would on any normal loan, and you have failed to agree with us on our payment in lieu. So change, yes; this bill, no.

1600

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order: I hope all members of the House will indulge me as I introduce to you a delegation from St Basil elementary school in White River, who are on their way back home from Great Britain. They went as a delegation to Great Britain, particularly to London, England, to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Winnie the Pooh. As we all know, Winnie the Pooh is from White River. He was born in White River and was transported to Great Britain by the Canadian Forces on their way during the First World War.

They actually saw the Queen travel to Westminster to open the House of Commons with the new government in England. Welcome to the delegation from White River.

The Deputy Speaker: It's not a point of order, but it's a very interesting story.

Further debate?

Mr Pouliot: Nickel Belt?

The Deputy Speaker: Lake Nipigon.

Mr Pouliot: My apologies. With respect, I thought that you had mentioned Nickel Belt. It's quite confusing nowadays since, courtesy of the Premier, what is now the largest riding in the province of Ontario, Lake Nipigon, they've made the riding disappear. Only 26% of the land mass, so how do we represent Lake Nipigon until the next provincial election? I now reside in the riding of Algoma, a mere 65 miles, 110 kilometres, away, in Manitouwadge, from my good friends and colleagues in White River, who have chosen after a very long journey,

while coming back, to pay us the compliment of their visit. I too would like to echo the friendly sentiment of my colleague, not on a point of order but using the time we have.

Je prends plaisir aujourd'hui de commencer le débat sur le projet de loi 106, un projet de loi qui aura des ramifications négatives, un projet de loi qui simplement fera mal aux gens, surtout ceux et celles, propriétaires, locataires qui sont parmi les moins bien nantis.

Les pauvres, les esseulés, les plus âgés, les infirmes, les gens à petits salaires, avec ce gouvernement, avec leur intention, seront les plus impactés.

What a mess, because Bill 106 does not work in isolation. You see, Bill 106 is part of a package. Bill 106 is part of a scheme, very much the centrepiece of a design which has for its purpose to find \$5.4 billion that would have been there but is disappearing over a matter of a few months by virtue of the tax break. Winners and losers. The ledger: for a dollar gone, you must find a dollar in revenue — not a secret. The obligations and the affairs of the state must be addressed. How do you reconcile the loss of \$5.4 billion and pretend that it's business as usual, that you're still doing your job of representing all Ontarians, of providing those essential services: health, education, transfers to municipalities?

It's quite difficult and you must hide the facts. If it's necessary, when you're embarked on a so-called Common Sense Revolution, to hide the facts, to veil them, to confuse — some would say to mislead, some would go as far as to say to plainly lie — do it. I wouldn't go as far as to say this. Some might find it offensive.

But suffice it that what is about to happen is of unprecedented and extraordinary proportions. During the last campaign the man there, Premier Harris, went around the province and said, "If you vote for us, you will find a government that will do what it says," inviting people to, "Put your X in the right place. You can trust me, Mike Harris, and if I don't deliver, if I don't do what the book says, I will resign."

During the campaign the government of today, the third party then, went around the city of Toronto and said, "We will not impose market value assessment." The government du jour, the people across, said they would never download on municipalities. They would never pass the buck. They would never abdicate their responsibilities. "Others would do this but not us. We're a fresh start. We're not like the others. You can trust us. We mean what we say."

A couple of their members were on the hook after the election. They lucked in. They woke up the next day and they had 82 members. The Premier dispenses favour, grants the pleasure of an audience to this member or that member, and people tip-toe, cap in hand, into the office of the Premier and say: "Mike, get me off the hook. During the campaign I said that we will not download. During the campaign I said" — like the Minister of Municipal Affairs said. The irony of it is now he's the minister responsible for the chaos, for the mess we're in, for the fear, for the downloading. He has to carry the can now. He used to kick the can. Now he carries the can. Now he hurts people. It's as simple as that, because he must satisfy the agenda.

Get off the track. Only one train leaving the station, that of the Common Sense Revolution. If you see some light at the end of the tunnel, this is no salvation. It's that train coming down the track and it will spare no one, except that if you're rich you will benefit. If you make \$250,000 in one year — imagine, a quarter of a million dollars; a lot of money — you would pay your taxes but now you will save \$15,000. Does it make any sense to you that if you're fortunate, if you're well placed, if you're a success and you make all that money, all that money coming in, this government will give you a tax break of \$15,000 per year?

If you're at minimum wage you don't make the \$15,000, but when you work for the minimum wage, sadly, you don't say much. When you work for the minimum wage you say so little, if anything, and when you work for that same wage, that pittance, you pay, because with those people you always pay. But if you're rich, if you're able to run away from the field, leave the field behind, then you shall be the benefactor of the magic of compounding and those around you will benefit also. Then you will be given an opportunity to perpetuate the injustices, not because you're mean, not because you're a bad person, not well intended — when you see the poor with their hands out, you will pray for them, you want to wish them well, but that's where it will stop because you're busy. There is a manner of humanity you must court, and you court what you are. You must take in presentations, you must be entertained, you must travel. There is no restriction, for you have that opportunity, and you have \$15,000 more in your pocket per year.

1610

If you're at the other end of the spectrum and you wish to be treated humanely when you go to a hospital, you will see that the staff are doing their best, but there's a reduction, there aren't as many of them. There are more of us, because there are more people and also we're getting older. You find yourself on a waiting list of sorts, fortunate not to see the padlock at the institution, the grand finale, the closing of health care institutions.

If the little ones are in the classroom so they can acquire the tools to defend themselves, to be like the others, to integrate economically, in grade 1 a few years back you might have had 25 people in the classroom. This year it's 32. What will it be, 34, 35? To find the \$5.4 billion you must cut someplace. There is no free lunch here. So you hit those who don't make noise, because they're disorganized, quite often not as well educated, but certainly not as wealthy.

Why do I mention these? These are the consequences behind the façade, the mask of Bill 106. Those fancy definitions; there is a human dimension. There is a tragedy which is about to unfold. Let's look at it this way, and I have an example which emanates from the Ministry of Finance. I did not prepare this — I speak candidly — it was given to me by some well-intentioned people in the Ministry of Finance. They weren't too secure when they did it and I promised them their names would not be mentioned.

The business occupancy tax is reallocating — it's like a shell game; money is shifting here; the lights are getting dim; the hands are getting fat and long, because

they're about to perpetrate a larceny, an act of thievery seldom seen before, and it's all legal. Presently the bank towers in Toronto — you saw them — the chartered banks, those big, shiny buildings here.

Interjections.

Ms Bassett: Can I make a point of order?

Mr Pouliot: We agreed that we would not call quorum.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Yes, there is a deal.

Mr Pouliot: I'm not the one saying those words. I will tone down the language; words to be taken to order on.

Bank towers currently pay \$15 million realty tax; that's the tax on the building, those cement and glass towers. Add to it what they call the BOT, that's the business occupancy tax, and you get \$11,250,000. They pay 75% of the realty tax, which is \$15 million. Total: \$26,250,000.

This is what is being proposed. Keep in mind — no free lunch — what is given on the one hand has to be taken on the other end. The realty tax stays the same: \$15 million. The reallocation of the business occupancy tax goes from 75% to 42%. Total: \$21 million. The saving is \$4,950,000 for the banks. I know they have been much maligned, they're an easy target, it's an easy shot.

Mr Wildman: Where is the government going to get that money?

Mr Pouliot: My distinguished and valued colleague from Algoma, who has been here for 22 years, asks, and rightly so, "Where is the government going to get that money?" We're not talking about a small sum here. This is not petty cash; this is big time.

The bakeshop, that's where they'll get it. The small bakeshop now pays a total, under the same formula, of \$52,000. They will pay \$56,800. The banks get a big break. The bakeshop only pays 30% of the business occupancy tax, but now they will go to 42%. The banks pay 75% and they go to 42% also. They save \$4.9 million. The bakeshop — the little shop; not Weston — the small doughnut shop pays \$4,800 more. Does that make sense to you? It doesn't make much sense to me. It's supposed to be progressive. It's supposed to be with a social conscience, that those who can afford to pay should pay a little more. There's no quarrel with that, or there shouldn't be. But that's the reality of what Bill 106 does.

Also, if you live in White River, if you live in Manitouwadge — and I know you have fewer than 5,000 people; you're remote, distant from the major centres — you will pay for the OPP now, community policing.

Mr Wildman: One of the gentlemen up there is a member of the OPP.

Mr Pouliot: That's right. Thank you very kindly. You have to deal with the council members now. I want to wish you well. It's going to cost \$180 million across the province. It's called downloading. "It's no longer my responsibility. You do it at the local level. You've got no money? Well, why don't you raise taxes at the doughnut shop, residential, all your houses, your mothers and fathers?" La payola in reverse.

Farm tax rebate: They get a rebate, but now the municipality is going to have to pick that up. The money must come from somewhere, \$165 million.

The assessment service to find out what the value of the property is: \$120 million.

Social housing operating costs — that's big time here — \$890 million.

Municipal transit — the bus — \$395 million.

They show no mercy. When the axe strikes, it doesn't discriminate, it's across; all members of the family get it. Talk about downloading genocide. Talk about economic cleansing: \$20 million from the libraries. Where does it stop? No words are too strong, none. The tragedy is unfolding. That's what the downloading is.

Public health: \$225 million.

Ambulance services — officer, get used to carrying people in the back of the cruiser, because this is \$200 million.

I want to take you on the Trans-Canada Highway, not on a day like today but on February 4, when you look across the highway as you near White River and the winds are howling from Lake Superior and you —

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. I ask that you address the Chair, please.

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Mr Pouliot: Yes, Mr Speaker. No one is immune. You are very much part of the people of White River, the people of Manitouwadge. They're getting it in the neck.

Special care homes, Mr Speaker, you can relate to that: \$25 million.

Ferries, those little tubs, those little boats that go back and forth across: They're a form of public transportation. People in Amherst, people on Pelee Island, people on Wolfe Island, where do they go? Well, \$25 million: You have 800 people in a small farming community. Now, they have their own navy. They can't afford it, to go back and forth to work, to seek medical services, to go on holidays, to do some shopping. Take the baseball bat, take the axe to them. The revolution goes on.

Fire, sewer and water: 10 million bucks. It doesn't appear to be much, but now the municipality is responsible, so in some cases it means start boiling your water if you don't have the money to pay for inspectors. It adds up.

Social assistance: Although there has been a change, it is still well over \$1 billion. Social assistance means the welfare recipients. If one of those less fortunate — that is, on welfare, on social assistance, and we all know of some — needs drugs because they are sick, because they have a condition, if they go to see the doctor and she or he says, "Here's a prescription; you need to take this every four hours" — we're here to help one another; that's what society is all about — now 50% of the cost of that prescription is going to be borne by the municipality. Pretty good, huh? Someone went in there with a magnifying glass to find a way to extract as much money — like a taxpayer's nightmare. Maybe for the government, with their intentions, it was a taxpayer's dream.

Long-term care: I mention that we're all on a waiting list, that we get frail as youth begins to leave us, as we get older. Someone might slip in the bathtub and tragedy strike. You need a hip replacement and you need some convalescing. You are not as spry; your bones are more brittle. You had better hope that your municipality has some money, because the provincial government is turning its back on you. You are no longer part of the team, you see.

One billion, one hundred and fifty thousand dollars: That's what Bill 106 does. Once you tear away the veil and look, scrutinize line by line, when you stop being fanciful with words to confuse people, that's what you end up with. Unbelievable. There's a difference of more than a billion dollars, but the government says to you: "If there's a difference of a billion dollars, we'll put some money aside, because times are good, revenues are coming in. We'll establish a pool."

But on the eve of implementation, when you ask the Premier — I'm delighted that the Premier has taken time from his busy schedule to be here today; the bill is of some importance, and I for one appreciate it — you don't have access to it because it's being formulated. "We're putting it together now. It won't take long." Where is the money going to come from? "Call us in about three or four months' time. We should have it on paper then and you can come knocking on our door for the difference."

But then there's a shortage; there's not enough money in the pool. We've asked for impact studies, gone to people and said, "You the government, you the Ministry of Finance" — and you're well staffed — "give us what it means to a municipality like Oakville, for instance." They're very wealthy. People know. They drive the product coming off the line. It's, "We don't have such an impact study," so we have to call the clerk-administrator and say, "May we talk to you, listen to what you have to say on Bill 106?" Candidly, it's \$18 million.

Those huge plants in Oakville are getting a break under the business occupancy tax, which everyone agrees had to be amended. It was not workable; it was a deterrent. There isn't any quarrel there. But the methodology, the bottom line, means they have to find \$18 million. Are they going to shell out, fork over the difference? Of course not. Oakville will apply for a sideshow. They'll try to get the \$18 million back, the council will. They can't get it from the big ones, so they will go at the commercial. I don't wish to impute motive; they're in a box. The options they will have is that they go to the small business people or they hit the residential level: the homeowners. Well, there are more homeowners than there are businesses. I'm not imputing motive. They'll try their best. They'll try to reach and seek an equilibrium. But some can count votes. I wouldn't put it past them.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Why don't they just cut costs?

Mr Pouliot: The distinguished member opposite mentioned, and rightly so, "Why don't they just cut costs?" Words of wisdom indeed, except that people have been cutting costs for quite a while, which brings me to the farm rebate. In some small communities, the removal of the farm levy will mean in excess of 50%. It wouldn't be realistic, because you cannot cut costs — in one case it was 85%. You can't say they're 85% fat. They have one grader operator. Heck, if I may be so bold, they have two people who work in the office. What are they going to do? Amalgamate? This is like sending a Turk to Denmark. They'll travel 200 miles and shake hands with the other community at a bingo game and say, "We're going to share services"? It doesn't quite work like that. We only wish it would.

They make a big fuss. Maybe you saw them in your community, Speaker, this army of assessors descending, some people in my village said, "like vultures." I said, "No, no, they make 12 bucks an hour." The government is spending 60 million bucks to assess 3.8 million homes and properties. That is one heck of a lot of money. I retrieve my papers: 3.8 million properties must be re-assessed at current value for taxation in 1998. That has never been undertaken in North America, and experts, people who do assessing — well, the government itself says it expects about 900,000 appeals. They'll never get out of this bag of snakes. The toxicity of this exercise has reached unprecedented levels. It's a mess out there: 3.3 million residential properties, 43,000 multiresidential properties, 200,000 commercial and industrial properties.

They are spending \$60 million. They are hiring hordes of assessors and they train them — well, it's like instant coffee. Some of them get as little as a day's training and then they're sent out with a list to assess — no feel for it, but out to assess. So when you see them opening their little notebook, beware, because they might become merchants of fear when you see the bottom line. If someone says, "You're not welcome," you must let them in. You wouldn't wish them to assess properties from the local watering hole. It wouldn't be fair.

1630

Then the government says: "Here's what we have. We don't have market value assessment because during the election we said we wouldn't have market value assessment." They got a couple of those whiz kids after the election and they said, "Change market value assessment." They both carry a dictionary. My friend Mr Conway from Renfrew, the best orator in this House, would say, "Market value, current value, actual value." One is Oxford and the other is Webster but it says the same thing. You could go to a forensic expert, you could go to a PhD and to DNA, and under the closest scrutiny they couldn't tell you the difference.

This is what value is. If I were to call my broker or a real estate broker and say, "What is the current value of this property?" — a certain amount. If I were to call the same person 15 minutes after and say, "Tell me what is the actual value of this property" — the same amount. Then I would say, "What is it currently worth?" and they'd probably hang up on me, "I've already given you the amount."

To satisfy what has been said during the election, the sins that were committed, the government had to get in a little deeper and say: "We must save face for some of our beloved colleagues. This is the amount of money, the fee simple, if unencumbered, that would be realized if sold at arm's length by a willing seller to a willing buyer."

Mr Gerretsen: That's the market value.

Mr Pouliot: That's the market value, it's the current value, it's the actual value, amen. The rest of it is just an attempt to veil, to confuse. It won't work.

Dozens of presenters, dozens of amendments by both the Liberals and the NDP at committee to make this workable. When the rubber hits the road, we all represent all Ontarians. We want the bill to work. Well, it's not going to work. The election is in November. They have

all those new responsibilities, all this downloading. It doesn't matter who governs you now, it matters more where you live. Keep in mind, we go back to the \$5.4 billion to satisfy those who run the fastest. Those emigrants, they get richer. We want to wish them well, of course.

Then, on January 1, you take on all those new responsibilities. You have no money. The only money you can raise — this is costing you more because this is not revenue-neutral — is based on your interim tax levy, which is 50% of the past performance. The fiscal year here starts three months after. "What am I going to do? I'm paying since January for new ambulance service, I'm paying for long-term care, I'm paying for half the drugs, I'm paying more for welfare, for general assistance." Oh, but then the final levy comes in and then you begin to understand the downloading. Then at the residential level and at the small commercial level, you begin to understand the scheme, the trickery. Some will be so angered. They will see the dishonesty of it all. The winners again are the banks. The second-biggest winners are the large hotels. The losers are the commercially assessed, the small business people and the residential homeowners.

The audacity of the government to say to municipal councils, "By the year 2000 you can expect a 10% decrease in your municipal taxes." Well, thank you for your presents. Do any of your parents believe in their wildest dreams that the mayor or the reeve will be able to pass on a 10% decrease in municipal taxes? Do you, Speaker? Do you, Madame? Do you, critic, believe anything but the dozens of presenters who said to you, and members of the opposition who mentioned to you, with the highest of respect, that you didn't have to do it this way, that there was a human dimension attached to the bill? No. The revolution had to go on. The train had already left the station. There was so little time and yet so much to be done.

I'm not going to wish them well. We will be back to say, "We told you so." I only wish we didn't have to do this, with all the sincerity at our command. I want everybody to succeed, to be well, but there is such confusion, so much uncertainty, that even the smallest of rumours leads to fear. It takes on extraordinary proportions because you did not think this one out. If you had done this, you wouldn't present this quarter-pounder of amendments. There would have been no need. Oh, no, you went through with the revolution without thinking it over, and then you're caught piecemealing.

I have taken pride in having the opportunity on behalf of our party to lead on Bill 106, and I thank you.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I want to join the debate on third reading of Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government, and I do so this afternoon to bring a perspective from rural southeastern Ontario where the impact of Bill 106 and related government policies in my view is going to be very significant, and in some real ways much more severe than I think even so committed and conscientious a government member as our friend from Rosedale, Ms Bassett, might imagine. I don't expect someone of her elegance and sophistication to appreciate all the rhythms of local property taxation out on the Shield and the near-Shield

territory of areas like south Renfrew, north Hastings, north Addington and Haliburton counties.

I want to say as I join my colleagues from Scarborough-Agincourt and Nipigon how very concerned I am about the impacts of this policy in Bill 106 upon property taxes in my part of southeastern Ontario. I want to take a few moments this afternoon on behalf of the taxpaying public not just in Renfrew but in some of those other areas: I repeat, north Addington, north Hastings and Haliburton, to name three others outside of my own electoral district.

I look at a number of these initiatives contained in Bill 106, and as a fairly senior member of this assembly, I am struck by how much of this stuff has been around since the days of Darcy McKeough. I look at the contents of Bill 106 and I see a number of important initiatives that finance ministers from Darcy McKeough through Frank Miller and Larry Grossman, and yes, Bob Nixon and Floyd Laughren, had presented to them on a number of occasions. Would that Frank Miller could be here today. I can hear the chuckle, because Frank would look at this and say: "Aha, there it is again. There's very little new in this."

On behalf of my old friend Frank S. Miller, PEng, I have a couple of clippings from the Muskoka press this week. Poor Grimmert is going to be going home to some rather difficult moments. I just noticed this week's Muskoka Advance and Bracebridge Examiner. The editorial from the May 11, 1997, Bracebridge Examiner is headed "Harris Conservatives Devastate Muskoka." Reading from the editorial in the Bracebridge Examiner of this week, just a couple of days ago:

"A deal between the Harris Conservatives and the southern Ontario controlled Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) is going to devastate Muskoka." The new deal around who does what and who pays for what will add an additional \$22.6 million in property taxes in Muskoka.

"Talk about dishonest campaign promises," the editorial goes on. This new who does what/who pays for what deal "makes Brian Mulroney look like a piker! Is this the Common Sense Revolution in action? Harris gives us a \$10-per-week personal tax cut in one hand and then combines it with a \$500 property tax grab."

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I'm not going to read the whole editorial. That's just two of them, the Muskoka Advance and the Bracebridge Examiner. That's not even in my area. I do know that they've been talking to people like the former CAO of Muskoka region, Bill Calvert, a very fine public servant who knows Muskoka a lot better than I do, and people like Bill Calvert and others are saying: "Hold the phone. This is big, serious trouble for property taxpayers in Muskoka."

I just have to ask myself, if Ms Bassett were the Minister of Finance — we all know her to be not only elegant but hardworking and I agree with all that was said about her before, though I'm not going to repeat what my friend from Agincourt said about some of those election manifesto documents put out by our pal Al in Rosedale and, yes, the benighted member for St Andrew-St Patrick. Boy, it is galling to see Brother Leach saying,

"Unlike Murphy, I own property in Rosedale, and unlike the Liberals, I would never impose MVA or AVA."

This is a government that likes to come in here and talk about accountability and honesty. Well, it hurts, because if I were a voter in Moore Park and I saw this bill, I would want Al Leach on a rack someplace because what he said couldn't be clearer. I'm not going to embarrass my friend from St A and P. She falls into a different category than the former generalissimo of the TTC.

But I want to talk about the impact of this policy, 106, and related matters on the property taxpayers of my constituency in areas like Renfrew county.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Mr Speaker, I seem to be exciting the honourable member for Etobicoke-Rexdale to a paroxysm of intervention. I don't understand why the member from Bedrock doesn't want to get into this debate. He's quite happy to go back to his department and call some of my correspondents and come in here in a less than honourable way and throw it into a debate. I don't know why he doesn't want to get up on his two legs today and engage in the debate. I happen to have the floor.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I might do that.

Mr Conway: Well, good for you. Good for you in the best Ed Philip tradition.

Mr Hastings: In your 22 years, haven't you?

Mr Conway: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'd like the order of the House and I'd like the member to address his comments through the Chair, please.

Mr Conway: I make the point that I didn't go into Moore Park and into the Annex and make the promises, so clear and so literal as the two promises that were referred to today by my colleague from Agincourt around the question of assessment. It's one thing to give the little homily about accountability, but those chickens have a way of coming home to roost, and if you make a promise as direct and as bald and as explicit as that, you bloody well better expect to be held to account for it.

I look at this policy, and I was looking at the impacts out in the area of midnorthern Ontario and my part of southeastern Ontario. If we had a finance minister whose name was on this who came from downtown Toronto or London or perhaps Kingston, I might say, "All right, I guess he/she doesn't understand." Ernie Eves is the member for Parry Sound. He's a neighbour to Muskoka. He, better than many in this government caucus, understands, or ought to understand, what it is people like Bill Calvert and the Bracebridge Examiner are talking about this week. He's a senior member of this assembly; he's a smart guy; he's our treasurer. He has lived for many years up in Parry Sound. He knows, or ought to know, the particular problems out in that territory.

I ask myself, "Where did this bill come from?" The Globe and Mail reported last December that the Minister of Finance wasn't showing up at meetings. The Ministry of Finance officials were quoted as saying, "We can't get him to briefings." I don't know whether it's true or not, but I look at a bill like this and I say, "Did the finance

officials develop this and get it by their political masters when the minister in charge wasn't around?"

Because I've got too much respect for my colleague from Parry Sound and, yes, the first lord of the treasury, the member for Nipissing, who ought to understand as well what it is the Bracebridge Examiner and the Muskoka Advance are talking about. Harris and Eves come from that part of Ontario, and this policy is going to be a very serious problem in that part of the province, as in my part, particularly that part of Renfrew county that is in and around the Shield. You might say, "Why?" All right, let me explain why.

We're talking about assessment and financing local government. Our friend the Speaker is from Perth; wonderful county. I haven't looked, but I know one thing about the land tenure and the land ownership in Perth as compared to Renfrew. In Renfrew county Her Majesty, in right of the province of Ontario, owns about 35% to 40% of the land. You get away from the Highway 17-Ottawa River corridor, you move inland into communities around Eganville and Barry's Bay and up through Bancroft and up around Denby, and you've got municipalities where the provincial crown owns 60% and 70% of the property.

I don't care how big you want to make the municipality, if you want to take the hamlet of Denby and amalgamate and make it 10 times the size that it is now or do the same in the village of Palmer Rapids or Eganville, you haven't changed anything. Her Majesty, in right of the provincial government, still owns a vast amount of the real estate. That's a very different kind of land tenure than you'll find down in Perth county or certainly in the Annex or in many parts actually of northern Ontario. It's that part of the so-called Frontenac axis in southeastern Ontario. It's the area north of Highway 7, east of Lakefield, Apsley, west of a place like Eganville and south of Algonquin Park. There's a big piece of real estate there, and we, as a provincial government, are the biggest land owner.

My question about Bill 106 — I don't have a problem accepting the argument that property should pay a greater share of the hard services. It's hard to argue with that. You reassess for equity and fairness; that's fine too.

What do you do, I say to my friend from Durham East, when the largest property owner in your municipality, no matter how big and no matter how amalgamated, is Her Majesty in right of the provincial government? If I'm a locally elected reeve or mayor, I have a good, a big bill for services like fire, policing and ambulance. Who do I give that bill to? I want to give the bill to my friend Hodgson, the commissioner of crown lands, the provincial delegate responsible for that imperial power and that big chunk of real estate. I have a feeling that my friend Hodgson would be very surprised to get the bill, and it's a big bill, occasioned by the very unusual kind of land tenure, different, quite frankly, from other parts of Renfrew county in the Arnprior-Renfrew-Pembroke-Deep River corridor, where we've got more of a Perth county kind of land tenure.

My question remains: What are we going to do? When people say to me, "Make it big; just make 10 municipalities one," you can do that and change nothing. Her Majesty is still the biggest game in town. Nobody seems

to have an answer for that part of this equation. So that's point number one.

Now let's get on to the other matters of the farm tax rebate, because I'm trying to look at this policy and say to myself, "How can I be fair?" I've got to say again, quoting one of my favourite colleagues from a former day, Stephen Henry Lewis, Stephen used to roll that word "chutzpah" out of his mouth on rare occasions with great effect. I watched last week after the budget and there's my friend from Moose Creek, the squire from Glengarry, the Minister of Agriculture, and he's going around just clasp his hands and saying: "Have I got good news for you. The Harris government has a major new initiative. It's a \$30-million rural job strategy for all of Ontario."

I look at the fine print. Now I see that it's \$30 million over three years. That's \$10 million a year. Now I have to take \$3 million of that out annually for summer job creation in the agricultural community. Now I've got \$7 million for all of Ontario, from Chatham through north Perth, out to the rural reaches of Renfrew. Big deal, \$7 million. At the same time, the government has announced a cancellation of the annual \$170-million provincial grant that's been payable for years to fund the farm tax rebate program. The farmers in Renfrew want to do their duty but they are not as dumb as some people in the current government think they are. "We're going to give you \$7 million annually and take \$170 million away from you annually." That's point number one.

1650

Now let's look at the deal that's being offered thanks to Bill 106 and related policies. I'm in a rural township. A couple of weeks ago, Noble, who is a nice guy and a good guy and well-meaning, came to my county council along with our friend from Lanark to talk, and more importantly listen, to the people of Renfrew county at their county council about their particular problems. It was a very interesting discussion.

The dean of our Renfrew county council is the reeve of Bromley township; a wonderful community, almost entirely farm, centred around the great hamlet of Douglas, a great place to be on March 17. Reeve Clarence McBride presented to the Minister of Agriculture that day their analysis in Bromley township of the farm tax rebate policy change. It's very simple: You're asking the township to come up with \$167,524. That's got to be apportioned across 454 households, almost all of them rural. These people have crunched the numbers and when they asked the questions of the minister, the answers were: "I don't know. I hear what you're saying. We've got some funds that may help out."

I'm telling you, good people at the local level, many of them loyal supporters of the current government, are looking at this with absolute and utter incredulity and saying, "How is it that a government elected with such a strong and clear mandate to lower taxes is going to do this to us in Bromley township?" and much of the rest of rural Renfrew county. They're just incredulous that —

Mr Pouliot: They won't vote Tory again.

Mr Conway: I'm not saying what their voting intentions are going to be; and these are good people.

The brief is here and I heard the answer. I ask my friends, including the Speaker, to think about the new

dynamic around these local councils. I'm speaking now just from the perspective of rural Ontario. Can you imagine, I say to my friend from Bowmanville, being in that council and saying, "What the province is going to do is cancel the grant and provincially we're going to set the farm rate at 25% of the residential rate, but now you elected officials," in the case of Bromley township, "are going to have to come up locally with that \$167,000 out of the hides of those local taxpayers." You don't have to be Albert Einstein to figure out what's going to happen in that environment.

Those Grits in their day in government in Ontario did a number of bad things but I don't think, inadvertently or otherwise, we ever thought about pulling a scam like this. If I did, I would not be going home, I can tell you, whether home was in Dereham township in Oxford county or in Bromley township in Renfrew county. I say to my friend from Oxford, if he wants to read the brief, he's welcome to read it. I'm sure he's read it.

People want answers because they believe the Tax-fighter when he says through his finance minister or the parliamentary secretary from the Annex or Rosedale or wherever, "We're about lowering taxes." I'll tell you, in Muskoka or in Renfrew it is clearly and manifestly not the case. So that's the farm tax rebate.

I'm on the council; let's say I'm in an amalgamated rural township, a much bigger unit out there in southwest Renfrew county. What have I got? My farm tax rebate's gone and I've been told I've got to make it up internally. My managed forest rebate program is gone too and I've got to do the same thing there, out of the local taxpayers' hides. But it gets a lot more interesting. It's not clear to me whether I can send a bill to the biggest property owner in my township, whether it's Raglan or Sebastopol or Griffith and Matawatchan or Rolph, Buchanan, Wylie and McKay or Brougham or wherever in south Renfrew, north Addington, north Frontenac, north Hastings and a good slice of Haliburton. It's not at all clear to me I'm going to be able to send a property tax bill to the biggest land owner in my area: the provincial government.

You see, under the old scheme, as long as we paid grants, conditional or unconditional, we at least had some moral authority. We are apparently not going to be paying conditional or unconditional grants to those municipalities, so we have no moral authority at all. The question remains: What are we going to do by way of sending tax bills to the largest property owner in those areas of south Renfrew and elsewhere that I have described and that are my special concern? Nobody seems to know and few seem to care, other than a kind of blithe, blissful hope and prayer that there will be some contingency fund someplace that will get us through the night.

But it's more interesting than that, because you see, now out in this area of south Renfrew and north Addington and north Hastings not only does Her Majesty in right of the provincial government own most of the land but she's very active. The vehicles that are out there are MNR vehicles. They're all over the place, directly or otherwise sponsoring activity on that crown land. If I'm looking at activity-based services, boy, I know who's causing a lot of the activity — not all of it, but a lot of it.

What am I supposed to do as the local reeve? I'm Bert Johnson and I'm the reeve of Griffith and Matawatchan and now I'm told, in addition to all the rest of this, I've got to start tithing my ratepayers for policing services. I've got to take out of the hides of the local property taxpayers moneys to police and maintain the roads so the MNR vehicles and Chris Hodgson's revenue base can be sustained. I'm really going to like that. When our friend Robbie Sampson comes up to visit the in-laws in Kingston and Renfrew and they go out to Hurds Lake or down to Centennial Lake, the cottagers are going to be ecstatic at paying a big new bill for rural policing so that Chris Hodgson's MNR vehicles are safe from the predations of vandals, and the local roads and the secondary highways are in good shape. Poor old Sampson, he has an accident down at Centennial Lake, or worse still, he has an accident up in Algonquin Park, and now I've got a big, fat ambulance bill for it. I wasn't kidding when I asked the Minister of Health that question last week.

I'm Bert Johnson and I'm a local reeve and I'm trying to understand what this government is doing. I say to myself: "All right, I've got to pay for land ambulances. How do I do this?" I'm getting angrier and angrier because my big taxpayer is that provincial government. Very unusual set of circumstances, and that's why it generally is missed by the smart people over at treasury and the even smarter people at economic development and trade, because they don't understand that idiosyncratic land tenure in that part of southeastern Ontario, but I can tell you, it is going to add up, all things taken into account.

My county council in Renfrew did an initial estimate of the first deal and concluded that the net effect to the average property tax bill in Renfrew county would be \$902 of additional annual property tax. That was their estimate. I see up in Muskoka they are estimating an increase of something in the order of \$500 a year with the new deal. I'm prepared to make allowances for some padding, let us say, but it is very clear to me, whether I go and listen to people in Renfrew or Hastings or Muskoka, they're all saying the same thing: Bill 106 and related policies are going to drive property taxes up and drive them up substantially. I simply want to put that on the record today.

I can't believe that members of this assembly from areas like Nipissing and Parry Sound would knowingly foist this kind of policy with this kind of tax impact on people in our part of midnorthern and, in my case, southeastern Ontario. I don't believe they are that wilful or that malevolent. I can only conclude that something happened when Ernie wasn't around or paying attention, because he wouldn't do this. I haven't gone up to Parry Sound, but I can imagine that there are going to be some very delicious impacts that will certainly seize the attention of the Minister of Finance.

1700

When I was in Burk's Falls the other day, and you've heard me in the last few days about that, I got a very good indication of what the pain tolerance of the current Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ontario is, and it's not as high as I thought it might have been. Over the years, the expectation — and I say this to young Sampson, who

looks like an upwardly mobile fellow — being the chancellor is the apogee now of a political cabinet career. But to get there and to stay there, generally, you've got to have a good pain tolerance. When I see what's going on with this hospital policy, I get the feeling that some of the leading revolutionaries over there are all right until the fires of the revolution start licking around the exposed skin of delicate parts of their anatomy.

In concluding my remarks about Bill 106, this is, without a doubt, big, bad news for people who live in communities like Mount St Patrick, Matawatchan, Madawaska, Golden Lake, Killaloe and Round Lake and Mayo township and Maynooth, Herschel, Cross Lake, Whitney and a lot of other places that most of you have never heard of.

My job is to be here, along with a very few other people, thanks to Bill 81. You see, you passed an electoral redistribution bill that for the moment is going to make it a lot easier, because the representation from that part of the world is going to decline. But I'm telling you very seriously on the third reading debate of Bill 106 that you as a government are pursuing a policy that is going to be very damaging to property taxes in my part of southeastern Ontario for some of the particular and, yes, peculiar reasons I've tried to advance.

I don't want to and I can't bring myself to believe that a government led by members from Nipissing and Parry Sound wants to do this. But I'll vote against Bill 106 on third reading because at this point in time I see little or nothing that makes me understand, makes me believe that the current government understands what it is that the reeve of Bromley township and the warden of Renfrew county have been saying eloquently and consistently for the last number of months. They, like I, understand that there have to be changes. I myself a few years ago went through county-wide reassessment. It wasn't much fun. In fact that's where I met the now member for Lincoln.

The now member for Lincoln, in his charming, dispassionate way, came to the hamlet of Combermere, and, boy, did he make a speech. I'll never, ever forget the member for Lincoln that summer night on the shores of the Madawaska River. Parliamentary rules and decorum prevent me from telling you what I saw that night.

But I'm going to tell you, it wasn't easy for any of us, Liberal, Tory or New Democrat. If you've ever been through — and the member for Oxford has, and certainly the member from Kingston has, and so has the member for Yorkview — it's tough, because there are winners and there are losers, and the winners say they should have gotten the break years ago and the losers are mad as you know what. It's not easy. There are problems with assessment.

I might say, by the way, that I hear from people who are closer to the assessment branch of the Ministry of Finance than I am that there is this mad rush now, the government is out hiring people, students and anybody they can get their hands on, giving them 24 or 48 hours' worth of training and saying, "Go out and do Al Leach's and Isabel Bassett's and Ernie Eves's work."

Somebody said a while ago, I think it was the member for Lake Nipigon, something like, "How many appeals do they expect?" Just from what I'm hearing out in the

Ottawa Valley, there are going to be lots of appeals, because you can't take a guy like me, who knows nothing about the practical aspect of administration, and say, "Here, take a six-hour course and go out and tell Rob Sampson what that cottage of his at Hertz Lake is worth." But that's happening. I'll tell you, it's happening in spades, and it's not going to make it any easier.

I never, ever thought I'd see the day when the greatest self-proclaimed taxfighter this Legislature has probably seen in the postwar period, the Honourable Michael D. Harris, and his trusted ally Ernie Eves would occasion a policy like Bill 106 with the kind of devastating property tax increases that the Bracebridge examiner and Renfrew county council and a lot of other people are quite properly and quite loudly and, unfortunately, quite painfully talking about, warning about and asking, understandably, for some real redress from this government and this Legislature.

Mr Marchese: It's a pleasure once again to have the opportunity to speak to this bill on third reading. I want to begin by tackling the title of this bill, because as I have pointed out on a number of occasions, this government is very good in its propagandist approach to titles. What I want to tell the public is, if you look at the title, and I'm going to spell it out again, you'll have a sense of why you should mistrust the government, because they call this bill the Fair Municipal Finance Act.

If I were an elector or someone out there listening to this debate and hearing that the title of this bill is the Fair Municipal Finance Act, I would be wary, because I would ask myself the questions as an elector: "Why does this government call it 'fair'? Is it necessary?" I argue it isn't necessary. The reason it's there is to give you an illusion of fairness, because underneath a whole lot of people are going to be whacked by fairness, because that's what this bill is all about.

I'm reminded that the expression I used yesterday in terms of appearances and reality is a constant theme in life and in literature, and it reappears here. It's the theme of: Foul is fair, and fair is foul. In this particular title of this bill, the Fair Municipal Finance Act, fair is foul. That's why they've included "fair" in the title.

I understand that those who are listening will also understand, not because we are politicians and we're faced with a Tory government that's doing a whole lot of whacking to a whole lot of sectors in society, not because they're politicians but because they automatically, as a natural inclination, understand that if somebody tells you it's fair, you'd better watch it, because it's likely not to be fair. That's the first warning, I indicate to the audience watching, about what to look for in this particular bill.

The second point has to do with the issue of market value assessment versus actual value assessment. A number of other speakers have spoken to this already, and they have indicated that there's virtually no difference between the two. But, you see, the government cannot afford to say that this is market value assessment; it can't, because if it did, it catches itself in a bind with itself, with some of its members, with M. Harris and others who said before the 1995 election that they would never support a market value assessment scheme. They would be damned should they call a scheme "market

value assessment," because it would belie, contradict much of what they said before the election.

But there is very little difference between the two. In fact, as I have noted from the reading I have done in this area, the only difference this government can claim or perhaps make reference to is the fact that the definition of current value based on annually updated, rolling three-year averages tempers the market value impacts of the previous legislation, some say. However, Bill 106 merely mandates the practice of rolling averages.

Current legislation calls for assessment updates every four years, but in practice assessors currently calculate on the basis of rolling averages because of the fact that market value data is dependent on the amount of activity in the marketplace. Further, actual value assessment uses weighting factors on market assessment which advocates say temper the market anomalies and introduce an element of fairness, but the opponents of AVA argue that such property characteristics are captured in the market value calculations.

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I say to my friend from St Andrew-St Patrick, there is no difference except that it's important for you as a government to say there is, and so we have a difference of opinion. You are the government and you have the levers of power, and propaganda to boot. You say to the public, "This is actual value assessment," and we lowly opposition members do our best to indicate through factual information, as factual as we can get it, to you and to the public, that it isn't so. All we can hope for in the absence of the media is that those people watching today will understand that there is no difference between the two, that we are dealing in fact with market value assessment, because that's what it's all about. That's point number two.

Point number three is with respect to the business occupancy tax that has been touched on by my colleague and others. This business occupancy tax is presented by the member for St Andrew-St Patrick as something that needs to be updated, brought up to date in the 21st century, because what we had was archaic. Some of us say: "That's fine. It is an archaic thing we have in place. It does raise \$1.6 billion in municipal revenues. But how do we deal with the fact that we are about to lose \$1.6 billion?"

My friend from St Andrew-St Patrick says: "Don't worry. We will pass through regulation the ability, the enabling legislation or regulation, that will allow municipalities to find ways to recover it if they want." We haven't seen that. We don't know what it is. That's what they tell us they would do.

I want first of all to say that the government looks good in saying: "We are upgrading ourselves. We are bringing ourselves up to scratch, to the 21st century." They look good in eliminating something they argue is archaic, but they leave the responsibility of solving that \$1.6-billion shortage to the municipalities.

We think that's wrong. We think they look good in doing it. They know they look good when they argue about why it should be eliminated, but the poor municipalities are going to be stuck with a \$1.6-billion problem. How do you recover it? "The tools," they say, "are there,

or will be there, don't worry." But municipalities will still have a problem of understanding how to tax and who to tax and whether or not that new tax to recover the \$1.6 billion can or would be fair to those who would be taxed. It's a serious problem that has not been addressed fairly in this fair tax bill.

The old act that permits the business occupancy tax was in its own way progressive. It was. I never heard any one of the members from that side of the House talk about the fact that there was some measure of progressivity attached to the business occupancy tax.

Some of the percentages date back to the inception of the tax in 1904, and it's difficult to explain why an abattoir is assessed at 60% while an animal hospital is assessed at 50%, they argue. But the original intent of the business occupancy tax was clearly to create a business property tax that was roughly progressive. The business occupancy tax assesses the barber at 30%, the banker at 75%, the delicatessen at 30% and the distiller at 75%.

Through those examples you get a good sense of the progressive nature of that tax, but once you eliminate it, that no longer is the case. In fact, banks under this approach would see a 40% decrease of their taxes, and if a municipality tries to get the lost revenue from the commercial and industrial class of property taxpayers, that will mean small retail outlets would see a possible 50% increase in the tax they pay.

The point I'm making in making reference to these two approaches is that the existing system is somewhat fair; the new one will not be. With great fanfare they introduce something that they say needs to be dealt with because it's too old, and they bring something new, and we don't even know what's going to happen except that we know there will be a \$1.6-billion shortfall. That's a lot of money that the municipality has got to find. As I say, they can look good in doing so, but the municipalities are stuck with the problem.

Remember, municipalities have had cuts of 40% to their budgets in the last two years. Remember too the shellacking the municipalities are getting, but particularly Metro — Speaker, you would understand this, because you are in the same vicinity as I am — the shellacking we have taken here in Metropolitan Toronto not just on the cuts, but on the issue of amalgamation where we have been bruised seriously by a government that doesn't listen to our needs and doesn't listen to our wishes expressed through the referendum.

We are now hit by AVA-market value assessment — the same thing — which will bring about, we argue, for single-family homes in the city, an increase averaging about 20%. We have the whacking of the metropolitan city here through the so-called Tenant Protection Act — here is another propagandist title that "Foul is fair, and fair is foul" — which does nothing but transfer wealth, imagine, the little wealth that poor individuals have, and transfers that wealth to the rich landlord, who already makes a very healthy return every year.

Who is going to be hit by the so-called tenant protection package? It's the tenants, who are by and large very poor. Over three million people are affected, a third of whom earn less than \$22,000 a year. The majority of housing is in Metropolitan Toronto, the majority of ten-

ants are in Metropolitan Toronto, and the majority of tenants are going to be whacked by the landlord protection package. We further have attached to this the downloading of so many new services, such as the property assessment services, social housing, municipal transit and GO Transit, community libraries, community public health, community ambulance services, community ferries, municipal airport services, fire services, sewer and water inspections, and social assistance program costs.

Metropolitan Toronto has been whacked by this government in a very serious way. It's important to point it out because a lot of people just don't see it and a lot of people outside Metro don't give a damn. But those of us living in Metro who are seriously bruised by the measures this government is inflicting on us worry about its impact, worry about our standard of living out here, worry about our quality of living, worry about the effects it will have on the ability of some people to be able to stay in downtown Toronto, not just Metropolitan Toronto, particularly in downtown Toronto.

We need to point these things out. We need to say there are no defenders in this Conservative caucus of Metropolitan Toronto and its needs. The examples I gave are to indicate to the public who are watching, particularly in Metropolitan Toronto, that you are having a great deal of serious pain inflicted around these issues.

1720

Why have we asked this government to give us impact studies? We asked for impact studies because we know that many people in Metropolitan Toronto, and not just in Metro but elsewhere — other speakers have touched on their own areas — are going to be affected by these changes. We argued as well that it's important for people to know what impact a particular bill will have on their area, on their communities and on themselves as individuals. We argue that they have a right to know.

We did that when we were in government; we did this in 1993 when asked. But the government does have not the courage to give the public what it has in its hands. They have done impact studies but they refuse to share those studies because they know there are problems connected to their revelation. Therefore, they are keeping it secret and in their own back rooms and in their own caucus rooms so as not to alert the public to the serious impacts of this particular bill.

We said, "We need to know, seniors need to know, people on low income need to know, people who are disabled and own homes on the meagre sums they make need to know the impact of market value on their home." They should know. They have a right to know. But the only time they will know is when this government has inflicted on them Bill 106; that's the only time they will know. Then they'll ask, "What evil has befallen us and who is the evildoer?" and wonder whether it's too late to seek redress from a government that is constantly hammering them. I hope it's never too late for the public to find out in time, to be able to remove from office those who are constantly attacking them in every which way.

One of the worst aspects of this bill, which I have spoken to before and want to speak about again, has to do with the tremendous haste with which this government has acted on this particular bill. We have been very

worried about the haste. I particularly am worried about the efficacy of their assessors and the efficacy in general of the work that is being done in this particular area. I have raised this concern as a question to M. Leach, without getting, in my view, any appropriate assurances that we have nothing to worry about.

I tell you, municipal revenues depend on a tax assessment system that is fair, efficient and stable. Any change to the current system should be approached with caution as mistakes could disrupt municipal income and the delivery of the services to Ontario communities. It's a serious problem. The proposed changes are being rushed through without due consideration of their impacts on municipal taxpayers and of the integrity and quality of the property assessment system.

I believe that strongly, and I am not the only one. Taken together, the rapid and simultaneous implementation of Bill 106, the downloading of all the new services, the Tenant Protection Act and the amalgamation which has been inflicted upon us — taken together, all these things, including the possible privatization of assessments, in my view will result in mistakes that could easily take a decade to correct. That is why I have raised with the minister on a number of occasions that we should not be rushing through this assessment system, where they want to assess approximately four million properties by April 1998. I predict chaos in the system.

There aren't enough property assessment people in the country. I desperately wanted to recall the number of appraisers we've got in the whole of the country, but I tell you, there aren't too many. I recall a figure of about 1,500 maximum — it's not 3,000 — in the whole country. I'm not talking about just here in the province but in the whole country. That should alert the member for St Andrew-St Patrick and others who are interested to know that we've got a serious problem on our hands. It means that as we try to contract out the work, there aren't enough people with the expertise to do the job.

The minister, Mr Eves, and all these people on the other side are saying: "Don't worry. We've got them. We know the system. We know how it works. You don't have to worry." But people who have been involved in this field know there is a lot to be worried about, a great deal to be worried about. Someone who is an expert on British Columbia's actual value property tax system has some advice for the Ontario government poised to introduce it here. They say, "Go slow and do it right, or maybe don't do it at all." These are people who have done actual value assessment, which is market value assessment. They've done it for years; they know what they're talking about. They said: "Go slow or don't do it at all. If you cannot do it right" — and I believe you're not doing it right — "don't do it."

You have given one day of training to individuals to do this. Isn't that a laughable thing? Does it speak to issues of competency in general that such a government can say, "In one day you're trained; now, boys, go out and do it"? The incompetence here is so pervasive that I don't know where to begin to deal with these matters — one day of training.

This is what the ad said as they were looking for these poor suckers out there to do this job: "We require a

highly organized, self-motivated individual to complete residential inspections in the Halton-Peel region. The successful candidate must have excellent communication skills, a neat appearance and a reliable car. General knowledge of residential home construction required.... Contract position.... Send résumé immediately to the Hamilton Spectator." That's basically the ad. It says that all you need is to be able to speak well, have a nice car, reliable so you can drive wherever you need to go, have some residential home construction, and that's it. That's the training, and you're sending these people to do assessments upon which these municipalities rely a great deal to get their money. You're sending a butcher to do heart surgery on some individual. That's what we're doing.

I'm worried, the province should be worried, about the impact of all these things. I'm worried about rural communities, which have lost \$175 million as a result of this government eliminating the farm tax rebate. "That's okay for the farmer because the farmer is not affected and we want it that way." We agree. But those municipalities are going to lose \$175 million, and this government hasn't said how it is going to replace that money. Remember the 40% of municipal tax cuts. Remember the dumping of new services on municipalities. Now they have inflicted on them a \$175-million shortage in rural communities.

The government says, "Don't worry," but municipal politicians from those rural communities are very worried about this. They told us as much.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: They are. They told us as much.

The arts community — Speaker, you would be interested in this too — is very worried. As you move to a market value system, these poor arts organizations which this government has whacked to death are worried that some of these buildings are going to go up in property tax by as much as, in some cases, possibly 50%. They're already starved for cash because this government just a couple of days ago announced further cuts, so all these cultural organizations, these theatre organizations that make Toronto livable and beautiful, are about to be whacked by this "fair" bill. There are no provisions in this bill for them, none whatsoever.

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All I want to say as I speak to those who are watching this program is that we need to get into the detail because that's where you find the substance of the abuse. As you unfold, as you exfoliate this malodorous bill, you will find that many of us are going to be affected by it, that many of us are going to face a tax increase that in some cases we won't be able to cope with. The seniors will not be happy to say, "We'll defer our taxes" as opposed to staying at the same level, because they have reduced levels of ability to pay.

The cultural sector that will be affected will not know how to deal with some of these violations in this new fair tax bill. As you see, as you hear, as you sometimes read these bills, all I can say to you is that I urge you to fight back against this government. I urge you to continue to write your letters, private and confidential, to the ministers and to other members so they see with their own

eyes that you are going to be affected, and that in being affected you're going to send a message to this government. I urge you to send a message to this government not just about this bill but about so many other bills that are hurting all of us.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a few minutes and I wish I had a few hours to debate this particular bill. This tax reform is something we have been waiting for for a long time. Unfortunately, it is not coming out the way we would have liked to see it, especially in Metropolitan Toronto. My colleague from Renfrew North gave a wonderful speech on how this is going to affect rural areas across Ontario, especially when he mentioned the farm taxes and stuff like that. In Metropolitan Toronto I think we are going to receive the same whack as the rural areas, farm country, are going to get with the approval of this particular bill.

In July last year the government accepted in principle, if you will, the recommendations of the Who Does What commission, the Crombie report. We were wondering what happened along the way, because the Crombie report did not recommend what we are about to have approved by this insensitive Conservative government. This is not what we expected would be presented by the governing body.

People in Metropolitan Toronto, taxpayers, homeowners, have been waiting for years, 40 or 50 years, to have some equity and fairness brought to the tax system we have at present. The people in my area, including perhaps 90% of the city of North York and Scarborough and Etobicoke and York and East York, with the exception of some areas in what is now the city of Toronto, were looking at some very hefty reductions, much-deserved relief from their property taxes. But I'm afraid that when they get their tax bills once this is approved, they're going to be screaming.

You know what? It's most unfortunate, because we have been telling this government: "Don't surprise the poor taxpayers any more. Give us the information, give us the facts, give us the data, give us the statistics so that people know in advance what to expect." But there is a big surprise and the government knows that. That is why they don't want to provide that information to the public.

They will not make tax reform a fairer system than what we have now. Mr Crombie said, "If this is what you're going to do, then don't do it, period." Under market value assessment — and it's the same darn thing under any other name we may call it — 80% of the homeowners in my area would have received a nice reduction, but not in the present proposal here. They won't.

People who appeared during the various hearings said, "You cannot bring a fairer system within Metro Toronto unless you deal with the GTA: the 905 versus the 416. We don't see that." Metro Toronto is subsidizing the other regions. Why should we continue to do that? I think it's unfair. It has been unfair for many years, and this, I'm afraid, is going to continue. How can the minister, the Premier here, say they are going to bring some relief to those people who have been overpaying for the last 50 years when what they're doing is bringing some good relief to the big banks and the big skyscrapers and downloading that amount on the poor homeowner and the

small business person, the small business community, when that homeowner and that business community should be the ones who should be receiving the bulk of the reduction from the tax reform?

Mr Leach said, "Oh, no, this is going to be a wash. We're going to even it out." Why did Mr Crombie say, "Don't do it"? Because it is not, as Mr Leach keeps on saying, going to be a wash. We know that and people know that. There is a huge difference. And who is going to receive the short end of the stick? It's the homeowners, the seniors, the ones who can afford the least; those who have no recourse, those who have no power with this particular government, those who are not being listened to by this particular government. That is why we and even Mr Crombie have been saying to the government: "Don't do this downloading on to the local municipalities. Don't remove the education portion if you're going to download all the other services on to the local municipalities." All along we've known, and Mr Harris did say, that there's only one taxpayer. Let's not pass the buck. This is exactly what they are doing.

Is this the tax reform we were hoping to see from this government? I think not. There are those who can still manage and stuff like that, but what about those people who can't afford it? The seniors, for example? "Ah, we have a solution," the Premier says. "Don't worry, we are going to tell the local municipality," which now will have to look after the assessment and what they're going to do with taxes and so forth, "to allow seniors to put a reverse mortgage, to put a lien on their house." Isn't that nice? Isn't it nice that we can be so sympathetic to those poor people who have been working through the years to pay for a little house, maybe a semidetached, maybe a very small bungalow? Now they are being told: "That's too bad. If you can't afford it, either sell it or you can put a reverse mortgage on it, and so you go." Is this the fairness the government is giving to us through this particular system?

We've been speaking here in the last few days of human feeling, human consequences. What the government does not understand — and if they understand, they don't say it, they don't want to put it in practice — is that there are people out there who are really hurting and really suffering. Those people need help. Who should they be getting the help from? From their government. When the government doesn't listen and doesn't help, what is going to happen to those people? Who is going to help? They are going to be left to fend for themselves. That is the way I see it: Instead of getting better, things are going to get worse.

1740

The very sad thing is that the government keeps aiding those people who need the least. The big corporations, the big banks don't need the assistance that poor people, the unemployed, injured workers, seniors, the sick, the single wage earner needs, and that's where the government should concentrate. We've been talking so much about creating jobs and stuff like that and we've been saying that the bulk of the jobs will be created by the small business community. You're going to kill the small business industries in the community with taxes like this. They won't be able to afford it.

Just one single homeowner is going to be receiving a \$500 or \$600 increase in one year only, in the first year, on a house assessed at \$5,000. A semidetached in my area is assessed at over \$7,000. I'm asking the government side, the minister and the Premier, how is a poor senior who can barely manage to pay the bills going to be able to afford to pay a lump sum of an extra \$700 or \$800 a year? It's totally unfair. I think it's totally unnecessary for the government to proceed with this legislation when they have heard from everyone that it's regressive, not progressive, is not fair, does not improve the system and is going to clobber everyone.

I want to leave a few minutes for one of my colleagues, who I'm sure is going to have a few more things to say about the proposal. I hope by the time we come back to the House for the government to give this final approval, they will really rethink it, especially you, Mr Minister, from Metro, and bring some changes that will really make the difference for the people in Ontario and especially in Metropolitan Toronto.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): It's with a certain amount of sadness that I stand today to speak on Bill 106, because I really don't think the government members quite get it when it comes to this legislation. They don't get it for a couple of reasons: first of all, from the perspective of basic fairness, what it means to the average citizen and communities across Ontario, specifically on the business occupancy tax and also what they're doing with the farm tax rebate; but also from the perspective of what this means to the Conservative government's political capital.

Madam Speaker, you ran in the 1995 election, which I and all other members of this assembly were part of, and you would remember specifically, as you're a Metro member, reading the pamphlets of the members who are now in this chamber, who got elected. What those election pamphlets said was that they would never, never — a solemn oath — introduce market value assessment in Ontario for the city of Toronto. That's what they said. It was on Al Leach's campaign literature, it was on Isabel Bassett's, Bill Saunderson's, it was on a whole bunch of other members who ran in the election of 1995. They said they would never, never, never introduce market value assessment for the city of Toronto.

Why did they say that? That's the thing you've got to really keep in mind. Why did the Conservatives in the election of 1995 say they would not introduce MVA? For two basic reasons: I think they recognized then that if you introduced MVA in the city of Toronto, sure, there were going to be some winners, especially those people on the outside of what is basically the downtown core, but also there would be a lot of losers. There would be a lot of residential ratepayers and also a number of small businesses that would be losers. I think that's one of the reasons they took the position they did leading to the 1995 election. I think it was also for political reasons, because they understood that no political party would really do well in the Toronto area taking a position of being in favour of MVA.

I was a member of the government of which you also were, Madam Speaker, and you would remember the debates we had within our caucus and you would remem-

ber specifically the ones in cabinet, where that whole issue of market value assessment came before our government, I believe in 1992-93. I remember those debates at the time as a member of that caucus, as Bob Rae and the Minister of Municipal Affairs — I think it was Ed Philip at the time — and others said: "No, we can't do this. If we do it, there are clearly going to be more losers than winners." That's really what this all comes down to.

The now government, which used to be the third party at the time, which was in opposition to MVA and actually applauded us when we cancelled moving forward with MVA, took the position opposed to it. Now all of a sudden they've flip-flopped. That's an interesting thing. I can't understand why they've done this, because they were so clear in opposition. They were so clear in 1992-93 in the position they took on that whole issue. All of a sudden now they take the position that this is fair, this is reasonable, this is equitable to the people of Toronto.

I've got to say, in this one there are winners and there are losers. There are some winners, there's no question about that. There are some property taxpayers who will see a reduction in municipal taxes. But I remember those conversations of 1992 and 1993 within our government when we looked at the numbers, and we were privy to the same information that Isabel Bassett, Al Leach, Bill Saunderson and a whole bunch of other people are privy to, that there were more losers than there were winners. I remember we talked about if we put that system in place, the province would have to put forward extra dollars to cushion the change, to cushion the impact on the losers so that over a period of five or 10 years the adjustment would be made, and at the end of the 10 years they'd still be losers.

So why, all of a sudden, the Tories have decided to go here and take this direction is really beyond me, because I thought they were the party of common sense. They ran in 1995 and they said, "We are the party of common sense and we will do things from a common sense approach." Where is the common sense of doing what they're doing with Bill 106? There is none. That's the first part of this. They ran in 1995 saying they were opposed to doing it, and what do they do when they become government? They do it. I call that a major flip-flop.

I also remember the Tories said in the election in 1995, "If we break any of our solemn promises, we will resign." I'm waiting. Nobody is running out the chamber. Where are you? How come you're not resigning? This is a broken promise. I guess they're going to stick around. They're going to break more promises, I think. That's what's happening.

The other thing that's interesting in this bill is that they're attacking another constituency. They first of all attacked the constituency of a number of downtown ridings and they're now going to be attacking the constituencies in rural and northern Ontario. I had thought one thing with the Tory party: I always thought they understood that to form government in Ontario, you have to do well in rural Ontario. If you don't, you really have a hard time trying to form government.

The Tories have been successful over the years. They've been extremely successful over the years.

They've been extremely successful in hanging on to the base vote that they have in rural Ontario. I think one of the reasons they do that is, they've always tried to a certain extent to cater — I don't want to use the word "cater" because I don't think that would be fair — but they've always tried to give rural Ontario a fair shake. But on this one, rural Ontario is getting a pretty bad shake, I would say. If any shake at all, it is a bad one, because they're doing two things, one through this bill and another part that's related, which I'll explain. That is, they decided they're going to get rid of the farm tax rebate program.

Again, I remember prior to 1995, from 1990 to 1995, the leader of the third party, then Mike Harris — boy oh boy, there was nothing more sacred than the farm tax rebate program. The NDP better not muck about with that one because that was the heart and soul of rural Ontario. I remember the debates and the speeches by the now Minister of Agriculture, Noble Villeneuve, who stood in this House and said, "Don't you muck around with the farm tax rebate program."

What did they do on getting elected? They cancelled the farm tax rebate program in Ontario. Again, I don't understand why. First of all, they said they weren't going to do it. That's number one. So they broke another promise. That's a flip-flop, as it's called. The second thing is, there's no common sense to any of this. Why would a party whose political basis is within central Ontario, rural Ontario, and that has such a large following in that part of the province all of a sudden decide to do something that's against that constituency?

They say, "Don't worry, we're going to fix that with Bill 106. We're going to get rid of the farm tax rebate program and through Bill 106 we're going to allow municipalities — or tell municipalities, not allow them — that on your residence, if you own a farm, where you're living on that farm will be taxed at 25% of whatever the basis is for the rest of the municipality." That will offset, in the view of the government, the loss of the farm tax rebate program when it comes to that individual farmer. The government gets up with great fanfare and announces that they're going to do that.

What they fail to say is the repercussions, first of all, of doing away with the farm tax rebate program and, second of all, of moving to the new system of taxation for residences on farms. The long and the short of it is, who ends up paying for that reduction in municipal taxes that is being given in Bill 106? It is the ratepayers of the municipalities of Ontario, point number one.

1750

If you offset, if you reduce the taxes — because the way it worked is that the province recognized, through the farm tax rebate program, that farmers had a pretty tough go trying to make a living on the farm. Some years ago they put in place the farm tax rebate program so that the municipality charged what the fair assessment should be on the value of a house that the farmer owned and then the farmer was compensated by the province through the farm tax rebate program. So the government gets rid of the farm tax rebate program and says: "Never mind. Instead, we're going to tell the municipality only to

charge 25% of the value of the tax that should have been charged in the first place."

The government gets up and they think that's a good thing. The problem is, the cost of that is going to be offset by every other municipal ratepayer in the province, including the farmers. What that means is we are all going to get a tax increase on the basis of what Bill 106 does, especially in communities where you have a high concentration of rural assessment. In a community like mine, a community like Black River-Matheson, the effect of this is fairly serious. This means a very large portion of their tax base will disappear and then the municipality of Black River-Matheson, as an example, is going to have to go out and raise taxes on other people such as businesses, such as companies or mines that might be in the area and/or the residents within the municipality.

The third broken promise, and this is where I'm going with this whole section, is that they are the government that said, "There is only one taxpayer, and whatever we do, we will make sure that we don't pass on our responsibilities as a provincial government to the municipal taxpayers or their governments." What are they doing in this case? They're breaking that promise yet again: third promise broken in one bill. If you were playing baseball, you would have struck out a long time ago. They wouldn't let you come back to the plate. Unfortunately for Ontario, this is not baseball, this is the Legislature and you get a lot more ups at bat than I would be willing to give you.

In this particular case you're breaking that particular promise that you wouldn't offload your responsibilities on to the municipalities. Clearly what you've done, you've cancelled the farm tax rebate program which the province will no longer pay for and you've transferred the responsibility for paying for lower municipal assessments on farms to the municipalities. That is downloading pure and simple. Don't sugarcoat it, don't gloss it, don't do anything else. That is downloading pure and simple.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): That's not downloading.

Mr Bisson: The member for Perth says that's not downloading. Excuse me, I've been around here for a while and you've been in municipal politics for a while. That's downloading.

I can guarantee you that if the member for Perth was still in municipal politics in his municipality and the NDP government was to do what the Tory government is doing in Bill 106, the member for Perth would be banging down the doors to the Legislature, and so would the citizens within his community. I find it quite interesting that the member for Perth all of a sudden forgets that on getting elected to the Legislature, you're supposed to be here to speak on behalf of your constituents, not the boss in the office called Mike Harris or his minions within the Premier's office, the highly paid, unelected political staff who decide everything. It seems to me we should be advocating for our communities.

But the point is, they've broken another promise. They said they wouldn't download. They recognize that there's only one taxpayer. What are they doing? They're downloading their responsibilities on to the municipalities and it means the municipal taxpayer, in another example through Bill 106, is going to get it in the ear.

I say on this particular one the government doesn't have a lot to be proud of. On this, they've clearly broken at least three promises. Like I said, normally, three strikes and you're out, but in this ball game they get a lot more balls thrown at them.

The other thing that's quite interesting is the comment that Premier Mike Harris made himself, and I believe it was today in a question in the House. We in the New Democratic Party had been arguing that the other part of the problem in this legislation is that you're eliminating the business occupancy tax. To put that succinctly, the business occupancy tax is a tax that's charged by the municipality to businesses that are within various buildings throughout the municipality.

That tax was based on, if you were a bank and you got lots of money, you paid a higher rate of tax than, let's say, mom and dad who own the corner store or the bait and tackle shop or whatever it was. It was a rate by which the taxes were charged. The more prosperous the business, the higher the class of the business, the more they paid in the business occupancy tax and the lower down you went, the less you paid.

The government has done two things. It's gotten rid of the business occupancy tax. What does that mean? That every municipality in the province will lose the revenue of the business occupancy tax. How are we going to pay for that? Yet again, the residents of the municipalities across this great province are going to see their municipal assessments go up in order to offset the gift they're giving to especially the larger corporations and banks within the province. That's another really interesting thing they're doing.

To get to the point, all of a sudden the Premier today started to realize: "Oops, hang on a second here. We just caught on to what this means. If we get rid of the business occupancy tax, there's going to be an offset on to other businesses, especially smaller businesses, within communities, and that may not necessarily be a good thing." So what does he do? He says, "We'll introduce another bill some time in the future to fix the problem with Bill 106."

My Lord, with every piece of legislation they bring into this House, they're mucking it up. They can't get it right. Then they say the way to fix it is not to amend the bill, no: "Don't listen to the people on the committee, don't listen to the NDP, don't listen to the Liberals, don't listen to the Ontario Association of Municipalities. We only listen to the minions, the highly paid, unelected staff in the Premier's office." Instead, they're going to ram this bill through at the end of my speech, and they're going to end up having to come back with another bill to fix the mess.

If they're incompetent, they should step aside and let somebody else take over.

Mr Gerretsen: I see I've got less than six minutes left to end this debate. I'm sure that by now the people who are watching out there are wondering: "Who is right about this whole market value, current value difference of opinion? Is it the same thing or is it not the same thing? Were the members who are now the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance incorrect when they on their

campaign literature said that they would never impose MVA on the citizens of Metropolitan Toronto?"

I just happen to have the definitions here, and let's just read them, of market value as contained in the current Assessment Act. I'm sure the members of the government will listen to this. It's section 19(2) and it states as follows: "the market value of land assessed is the amount that the land might be expected to realize if sold in the open market by a willing seller to a willing buyer." It's land that is sold in an open market between a willing buyer and a willing seller. That is in the existing law. That is what market value assessment is.

Now let's take a look at current value assessment as contained in this proposed act that we're talking about now. Current value is the amount of money that is realized if land is sold at arm's length between a willing seller to a willing buyer.

The only difference is that in the current value definition it talks about arm's length between a willing seller and a willing buyer, and in the market value assessment it talks about being in an open market between a willing buyer and a willing seller. I think anyone will tell you that is exactly the same thing. Let's get that clear.

Those individuals who ran on a platform that said the PC Party would never introduce market value assessment are dead wrong. I don't want to use any unparliamentary language here, Madam Speaker, because I know you'll be watching for that, but they were dead wrong, and you would think that they would at least have the decency to do the honourable thing at this point and say to their own ratepayers, their own residents: "We made a mistake. We said we weren't going to implement it and we did."

There's nothing wrong, by the way, in a politician every now and then admitting they have made a mistake. As a matter of fact, there are some members of the public who would even appreciate that, because they would say, "There is an honest politician." There's still a possibility for the parliamentary assistant, who is in the House, to get on her feet now, and I will yield some time to her if she so desires, to say: "I made a mistake. Whatever I said in my campaign literature is wrong." That's the first point I want to make.

1800

The second point is quite simply this: I went through a market value reassessment program or a current value reassessment program in my own municipality about 15 years ago. I can tell you one thing and one thing only that everyone who went through the process will totally agree upon: that whatever you are told the impact will be on that municipality, the actual impact, once it's implemented, will be much, much worse, much more pronounced; there will be much greater disparity between the properties whose values will go up and whose values will go down, and the actual percentage differences in tax increases and decreases will be much, much greater than the ministry will tell you about.

I know the ministry has its studies. They do these studies beforehand. They know what the impact in a particular municipality will be. They know that. We have asked repeatedly over the last six to eight weeks for them to release the studies so that the people in the local municipalities across this province can make up their own

minds as to whether they think it's a good thing for their own municipality or for their own particular circumstance. We have been repeatedly rebuffed in our efforts to get those studies.

They've got the studies. I say to the parliamentary assistant, why don't you release them? Surely the public has the right to know. Whether it's in your riding or in the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing's riding or any riding in Ontario, they have the right to know what the impact is going to be of implementing this particular bill. I'll predict right here and now that the actual impact in each and every municipality will be much, much larger than the government lets on right now.

This isn't something new. This is something that has gone on for the last 20 or 30 years in every municipality that has implemented voluntarily — up until now — a market value reassessment system. I say to the ministry, if you have nothing to hide, release the studies so people can make up their own mind.

Finally, as we close this debate, let me just say once again that this is simply another part of the government's downloading efforts. We have studies now that concur that even with the new downloading arrangements that were announced a week or so ago, there is still a \$663-million difference that municipalities and the local taxpayers will have to pick up. That means that on the average throughout Ontario you will still see a property tax increase of somewhere from 5% to 10%.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Mr Eves has moved third reading of Bill 106. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Pursuant to a prior agreement of this House, a recorded division is required and will be deferred until immediately following question period on Monday, May 26, 1997.

Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Pursuant to standing order 34, the member for Sudbury has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines concerning vehicle registration. The member for Sudbury has five minutes.

VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the record with regard to this new Mike Harris vehicle registration tax because during the campaign of 1995 Mike Harris put out a document called *A Voice for the North* in which he said that he would ensure that there would be "private-public partnerships to build and maintain roads and highways in northern Ontario."

The people at the time didn't realize, but the private partnership they were going to enter into was going to be a new tax imposed on northerners, a new tax which would generate money to do the road construction and the road repairs that Mike Harris thought were necessary in northern Ontario.

But Mike Harris forgot one thing. He forgot that previous governments, starting with the Peterson government in 1985, understood that there was a difference between northern and southern Ontario when it came to running and maintaining a vehicle, that gas prices were higher in northern Ontario. There's no question, they were higher in 1985 and they're higher now in 1997.

But the Peterson government recognized that, and from 1985 until their mandate was over they acted in a variety of ways. They created a ministry to ensure that the northern perspective would always be a part of this Legislative Assembly; they created the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. They introduced the Northern Ontario heritage fund. The government that followed, the New Democratic government, understood that too and removed the vehicle registration fee from northerners. They ensured that northerners would understand that there is some fairness attached to government, regardless of the stripe, regardless of a government being a Liberal government, a New Democratic government.

But how does this government recognize the difference between northern and southern Ontario gas prices? It's quite simple. Mike Harris reviews the situation and he finds: "Listen, I don't have any seats. I'm from the north, but really, I'm living in Toronto now. My votes are really in Toronto. Forget the north. Let's tax the north."

So in his second budget he imposes a tax on northerners. The only tax to be imposed on any residents in Ontario was a tax on northern Ontario residents. Is it a Mickey Mouse tax? Is it a small tax? The government members might say, "Well, it's only \$37." I tell you, it's a lot more than that. It's a denial that there is a difference between northern and southern Ontario when it comes to operating a vehicle. It's a denial that living in the north and operating out of the north is more expensive than in the south. It's a denial that this government understands there is a fundamental difference between being a resident of northern Ontario and of southern Ontario.

Is it a minuscule amount? I think not, because if you look at the numbers — the minister said I wasn't using accurate numbers. I should tell you, I'm using the government's numbers. I don't know if they're accurate or not, but they're the government's numbers. It's the Ontario Road Safety Annual Report and it clearly identifies the number of motor vehicle registrations there are throughout the different sections of Ontario.

Let's look at the impact of the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax. If we look at the area of Algoma — I know the parliamentary assistant to the minister would be interested in that because he grew up in Sault Ste Marie — you find out that the impact for one year is \$3.3 million. If you look at Nipissing, where the Premier is from, you find it has an impact annually of \$2.1 million. In total, over one year it's over \$23 million; over five years it's over \$115 million. I suggest that is a major impact.

In the 19 seconds I have left, I would just like to refer to an editorial which appeared in *Northern Life*. I guess it summed it up the best. It says "Northerners Frozen Out in Budget 1997." How true it is with the new Mike Harris tax.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Marion Boyd): The parliamentary assistant, the member for Brampton North.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I am very pleased to address this issue, particularly since I was born and brought up in northern Ontario. I have heard the argument since I was a child — for some 40-odd years now, and I am 50 — that northern Ontario was always hard done by, that any money that was generated as a result of fees, gasoline taxes, all went to southern Ontario to really help pay for the 400 series highways. That was the argument that was always traditionally given.

The reality is that the first minister, I might remind the member for Sudbury, who addressed the problem in northern Ontario was the late John Rhodes, the Conservative Minister of Transportation, from Sault Ste Marie, who acknowledged the fact that there was a difference and the uniqueness of northern Ontario.

1810

This budget and this fee is really about fairness. I want to quote. Since the member quoted from Northern Life, I'd like to quote a couple of others. In the North Bay Nugget:

"North Bay Councillor Jay Aspin said 'most' of his colleagues in the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) 'agree wholeheartedly' with the province's method of freeing up \$200 million for highway upgrading."

I go to the Geraldton Times, May 14, yesterday:

"Frank Miclash, Liberal MPP for the Kenora riding, says residents of northern Ontario shouldn't have to pay the annual licence fee...just because we have to pay more for gas..." I'm quoting from the editorial here. These are not my words.

"He and his northern colleagues have blown the numbers way out of proportion, suggesting that all 550,000 vehicles registered in northern Ontario will be paying the \$37."

"Trouble is, he and his Liberal buddies forgot to subtract the many thousands of commercial vehicles (trucks, pickups, vans and cars, including rentals) before multiplying by 37. Commercial vehicles have paid all along, and a lot more than 37 bucks a year."

"It boils me when politicians misuse statistics this way to attract attention. It doesn't bother me that we'll pay \$37 a year for licence plates, particularly if this money goes towards fixing up and maintaining the northern highways. We've all paid them before...and the roads need fixing."

I want to remind the member that improving northern highways is crucial to the northern economy. We understand that and we appreciate that. Industry, tourism, the mining industry, the forestry industry, these are critical elements to northern highways and to the northern economy.

It's true the NDP removed the fee in 1991, but let's look at the exact actual costs that took place. The 1989-90 budget for highways in northern Ontario under MNDM was \$108 million; in 1990-91 it was increased to \$136 million; in 1991-92, after the fee was dropped to zero, the expenses dropped to \$115 million; then they dropped in 1995-96 to \$95 million.

This year the commitment in the budget was for \$200 million over three years, not \$115 million over five. I just want to make that point, sir. But in addition to that, the budget was increased in 1996-97 to \$136 million and in 1997-98 it'll go to \$141.5 million.

The \$15 million coming in from the \$37 fee that comes from northern Ontario is the small portion. The reality is that the rest of that money is in fact coming from the gas taxes and other provincial revenues from all over the province, and the commitment is there to northern Ontario, to the highways. The highways have been allowed to become dilapidated. They've been allowed to crumble over the past few years.

We realize the critical importance of the highway infrastructure in northern Ontario, as I said earlier, for the mining industry, the forestry industry and the tourism industry — critical components of northern Ontario. That is the reason why this province and this government are committed to putting the money into that infrastructure for the development of those northern highways. That is our position and why we feel it is a fair and reasonable commitment on the part of the drivers and on the part of the government.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Marion Boyd): Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Cochrane South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Attorney General concerning French-language services with respect to the Provincial Offences Act.

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud): On peut se rassurer que vous, comme procureure générale, n'avez jamais fait ce qui se passe aujourd'hui avec le projet de loi 108.

On va passer à travers très lentement pour que le procureur puisse comprendre. Ce que vous êtes en train de faire, Monsieur le procureur général, c'est simplement ceci : avec le projet de loi 108, vous transférez aux municipalités l'habileté de faire la collecte des contraventions qui sont habituellement collectées partout en l'Ontario.

En d'autres mots, si la police de Timmins, de Toronto ou de North Bay arrête une auto aujourd'hui et lui donne une contravention de vitesse, la police municipale écrit le billet et l'argent va directement à la province. La collecte et tous les travaux pour administrer cette contravention sont faits par la province. Vous êtes en train de transférer certaines responsabilités aux municipalités qui choisissent d'offrir ces services-là elles-mêmes et elles garderaient une partie de cet argent. Sur ce bord-là on ne s'obstine pas ; ça fait un peu de bon sens.

Où on a un problème c'est que présentement tous ces services-là sont protégés sous deux législations. Premièrement tous les services hors de la cour, en d'autres mots le billet que je reçois, les services que j'ai en cour etc, sont soit couverts sous la Loi 8, la Loi sur les services en français, soit sous l'autre loi qui gouverne les cours elles-mêmes.

Ce que vous êtes en train de faire, en faisant le transfert des services aux municipalités, c'est que les municipalités ne sont pas couvertes par la Loi 8. En d'autres mots, tous

les services offerts hors de la cour ne seront pas couverts par la Loi 8. On vous demande, Monsieur le procureur général, d'accepter avec nous l'amendement que j'ai mis de l'avant en Chambre cette semaine pour nous rassurer que lorsque vous transférerez ces services, tous les droits que nous, les francophones de l'Ontario, avons acquis sont respectés, y compris tous les services hors de la cour. Alors on vous demande d'appuyer l'amendement qu'on a mis de l'avant pour qu'on puisse se rassurer que nos droits comme francophones seront respectés.

L'autre affaire que je veux signaler, c'est que le procureur général va nous dire : «Ne vous inquiétez pas. On va mettre en place des ententes, et avec les ententes qu'on signe avec les municipalités, tout va être réglé. Il n'y a pas de problème.» Moi, je serai rassuré, avec mon gouvernement, qu'on signe ces ententes-là avec les municipalités pour que les services en français soient donnés.

Possiblement au commencement vous allez essayer de signer ces ententes-là et vous allez essayer de faire la bonne affaire. Le problème que j'ai en tant que francophone, c'est que je n'ai pas le droit d'appel à la cour. Si la municipalité décide de ne pas offrir les services en français, j'ai besoin de me fier au procureur général. Moi je dis que, comme francophone, je ne veux pas que mes droits d'utiliser ma langue en Ontario soient seulement sous votre protection en tant que ministre.

Je veux savoir que si les villes de Timmins, Toronto, Ottawa, n'importe lesquelles, décident pour n'importe quelle raison dans les années à venir qu'elles vont arrêter d'offrir ces services-là en français, moi je pourrai faire appel à la cour. Quand vous signez une entente, Monsieur le Ministre, ce n'est pas la même affaire que moi ayant le droit sous la loi. C'est ça, la grosse différence, et c'est une des grosses préoccupations non seulement à moi, Gilles Bisson, député néo-démocrate de Cochrane-Sud, mais aussi de beaucoup de Canadiens français ici en Ontario. Vous devez comprendre la différence.

On vous demande d'appuyer notre amendement pour garantir que les services que les municipalités vont offrir hors de la cour sont garantis sous la Loi 8. On n'est pas satisfaits que les ententes que vous allez signer vont nous donner, à long terme, la protection dont on a besoin.

L'autre point à signaler, c'est la question des protections sous la Loi 8. Présentement votre collègue M. Villeneuve a, comme vous dans votre ministère, du personnel pour s'assurer que si les services ne sont pas bien donnés en français dans tous les ministères, où ils sont désignés, ou s'ils ne sont pas donnés du tout, on a le personnel qui est capable de voir à ce que ces services-là sont donnés.

Sous la loi que vous proposez vous dites, «On peut, si on veut, nommer une commission pour s'assurer non seulement que les services sont offerts en français, mais que les autres acquis que vous avez négociés dans vos ententes seront respectés.» Mais ça ne dit pas que ce sera obligatoire.

Ma crainte est encore, comme francophone, que c'est peut-être aujourd'hui — on va essayer de faire un bon show, comme on dit dans l'affaire, pour faire sûr que nos droits sont garantis. Mais avec le temps moi, francophone, je serai encore à la merci du procureur général qui n'aura possiblement pas à cœur les questions de tous — possiblement pas vous — les francophones de la province.

Alors, on vous demande d'appuyer notre amendement et faire savoir aux francophones de l'Ontario que nos droits seront respectés dans la loi.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'd just like to say initially that there's nothing in this legislation that would lessen the provision of French-language services. The Courts of Justice Act protects trials in French and will continue to apply in all areas of the province. Trials will still be offered and available in the French language.

An MOU is the best way to work out the roles and responsibilities for services. Every municipality is different. We will make our best efforts to work with municipalities to ensure that the transfer agreements reflect their communities' needs. Currently many municipalities provide services in the French language where there is a local demand.

This government believes that municipal governments are capable of responding to the needs of the citizens in their communities. We are confident that they will ensure the orderly transfer of the administration and prosecution of provincial offences.

1820

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Marion Boyd): Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Renfrew North has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health concerning overstated savings out of the closing of hospitals. The member will have up to five minutes, and the parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I'm delighted to welcome my friend the Minister of Health, sitting phantom-like in his empty chair. I think that's a perfect representation, because he's like a vapour. He's responsible for everything and nothing; he sandbags the minister of corrections down in Brockville, but he has nothing to do with it. He's quietly going up to Meaford and out to Burk's Falls and making sweetheart side deals with his ministerial friends. Well, that's not the process that this is all about.

I'm here tonight, I say to my phantom friend the Minister of Health, because in a few weeks' time you're going to be closing the Pembroke Civic Hospital, which has served the North Renfrew community for almost 100 years. Your padlock is going on that hospital in a few weeks' time, starting with the shutdown of the emergency department.

I raise the question today, as my colleague from York South did yesterday, about the overstated savings in this whole process of restructuring hospitals; that is, closing hospitals, like the Pembroke Civic Hospital, like the Riverside in Ottawa, like hospitals in Thunder Bay, the Sudbury General, to name but four of about 15 that have already been sent to the guillotine.

Yesterday we heard from the Ottawa folks that the savings calculated from the shutdown of the Riverside, the Montfort and the Grace in Ottawa, the so-called savings that the Health Services Restructuring Commission have estimated to be annualized at \$125 million — \$126

million, actually — are overstated, according to the best calculations of outstanding independent authorities like Deloitte and Touche, by a factor of about 70%. In fact the chairperson of the Ottawa General Hospital, who is, as I said earlier today, no enemy of this government — I mean, Pierre Richard is a very good fellow who is warmly inclined to the current provincial government — says, and I repeat what I said earlier, that the savings are wildly exaggerated in Ottawa and that the commission's numbers, he says, are wrong, and this miscalculation will create a very serious situation for patient care.

My friend Kennedy yesterday talked about the wildly exaggerated savings at the Women's College Hospital here in Toronto. I sometimes think that Women's College or the Riverside or the Pembroke Civic ought to try to amalgamate with the Burk's Falls Ernie Eves testimonial hospital up in east Parry Sound. That's probably their best bet.

In Pembroke, the commission itself, between December of last year and February of this year, admitted that it overstated the savings with the closure of the Pembroke Civic Hospital by over 30%. The preliminary report in Pembroke estimated that they would save, with the closure of the Pembroke Civic Hospital, \$14.6 million. Two or three months later, when they did the final calculations, the commission said: "No, we're wrong. It wasn't really \$14.6 million; it's actually \$9.7 million." They are admitting themselves that they got it wrong in Pembroke by — what does that amount to? — about \$5 million, or roughly 33%.

The interesting thing about Pembroke is that not only were they wrong about their savings, but it's very interesting — and this is a point that the public has not fully understood. In Pembroke, the commission having overstated the savings very considerably, now Jim Wilson and Mike Harris are coming into Pembroke and saying: "We're going to save, we think, \$9.7 million annually from the hospital budget in Pembroke alone. We are going to reinvest, yes, \$1.37 million of that saving annually in Pembroke and area."

Well, the arithmetic that the product of the John Roberts and Bill Davis school system can figure out is simply this: Your savings — you're going to take out \$9.7 million annually and put back \$1.3 million. We're net losers annually of \$8.4 million.

Wilson and Harris and company like to have people in Renfrew county and elsewhere believe, "Oh, not to worry; we'll reinvest the savings." Let it be clear: The savings in Pembroke with the closure of the Pembroke Civic Hospital, in Ottawa with the closure of the three hospitals there, in Toronto, are clearly overestimated, in some cases wildly so. Even more importantly, using Pembroke as an example, the Harris government is going to take \$9.7 million annually out of our hospital budget and put back \$1.3 million. We're net losers annually of over \$8 million. Tory arithmetic; Tory logic.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): Just in the couple of weeks I've had the opportunity to play the role as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and in the two years or so I've had the pleasure of working with Minister of Health Jim Wilson in this government, I've come to know him as a man with a commensurate

knowledge of the health care industry and of that portfolio and with a very strong dedication to improving health care systems, not just for Niagara, my area of particular interest, but for all Ontarians, whether they're young whether they're old, whatever stage of life they may be in.

To follow up on the analogy of spirits, Jim Wilson was one who had haunted the previous government when he saw 10,000 beds closed in the last few years without one significant change in terms of administration: All would stay in place, empty beds in empty wards, but still with the heating bills, hydro bills and light bills.

I understand that it is human nature to try to defend that piece of the health care pie you have. But without some leadership on this issue — the previous governments had left all administration in place. Really, when you think about it, I would guess that one administrator equals about three nurses. Where would you put the money?

Jim Wilson has been given a very challenging task but a task I think he is up to, and I would support him in organizing health care services to make sure the patient comes first, not the administration, not the existing organization, but in terms of organizing better for the patient at the top of the ladder instead of the existing administration.

Ottawa plays an example in that. The member opposite brings up the study by Deloitte and Touche sponsored by three of the hospitals in the Ottawa region that have disputed some of the findings of the Health Services Restructuring Commission in terms of total savings from their recommended changes in the Ottawa area. I would think the province-wide restructuring commission would welcome this report from Deloitte and Touche to make sure the numbers do add up. This group has been invited, I would imagine, to put that paper forward to make sure that the best decisions are being made by the Sinclair commission there in Ottawa.

The Ministry of Health put forward its position on April 8 to the commission during that response period. As the response period continues I know they will consider all the viewpoints submitted, including this paper from Deloitte and Touche, to make sure the best decision is made for those patients in Ottawa to get the best quality of services at the right place at the right time.

Another issue brought up, of importance to me as a member of Niagara and to a lot of other members of this House, deals with the effect on the rural communities. Early on in the process the current PDST, the planning decision support tool — that was, I understand, a 1992 tool — gave various guidelines and benchmarks in terms of what your achievements should be, how efficient a hospital should be, how long the stay should be, how long people should be in their beds and how long an operation should take, whether it's a day surgery or an overnight occasion.

When you looked at the areas like Grey-Bruce or Niagara, a very strict application of the tool resulted in hospitals being closed in those communities. Where I come from, in Port Colborne, we had 2,000 or more people, in Fort Erie about 3,000, and I know the Grimsby area, West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, had an even larger number, 5,000 or 6,000 people out saying that when you close down the single hospital in a community that was

going far too far; that you need to preserve services like access to emergency care.

I brought this forward as the representative of Niagara South, saying what I've heard in my community, and many other members on both sides of the House have done the same. We've seen some action in the ministry, then, to say, "Well, perhaps the PDST does not adequately address the needs of the rural communities." It's an urban centre tool and there will have to be some refinements, some adjustments, to make sure that those in the rural communities, like Fort Erie and Port Colborne, like those in Beamsville and Vineland, up in West Lincoln, will have that guaranteed access to emergency care.

I look forward to working with the minister so that people in Ottawa, Fort Erie, Burk's Falls, Willowdale and Brampton, which we dealt with earlier today — to ensure that those patients, again whether they're young, old, men or women, whatever their needs, will get the types of services they need at the right place, at the right time, as we bring health care in Ontario into the 21st century.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday, May 26.

The House adjourned at 1831.

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Monday 26 May 1997

Lundi 26 mai 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 26 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 26 mai 1997

*The House met at 1335.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Educators and multicultural groups and concerned individuals are dismayed by the disbanding of the anti-racism branch of the Ministry of Education. The branch was at first downsized; now it has been removed altogether. This fits with the pattern for this government. The Ministry of Citizenship eliminated its Anti-Racism Secretariat as well. The anti-discrimination and equal opportunity branch of the Ministry of Education was doing important work in developing anti-hate crime initiatives and education proposals to reduce racism and sexism in the schools, and now it is gone.

Clearly, this government does not consider anti-discrimination and anti-hate crime initiatives to be important or it would not be disbanding the section of the ministry that is working on these issues. But what is equally disturbing is that one of the most important efforts of the branch appears to have been shelved. For some time now, work has been done on developing a guide for principals and teachers to use in confronting the recruiting by hate groups being done in our high schools. The guide is ready to be released, but it appears to have disappeared.

The ministry insists that the expertise of the anti-racism branch will remain within the ministry, but these individuals will be scattered; they will no longer have a focus for their work; they will no longer serve as advocates. If the government wants to send a clear message that it opposes discrimination and the activities of hate groups, let them reinstate this branch and release the work that has been done so some concrete action is taken.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Last Wednesday I went to Ridgetown in the county of Kent to confirm that the Minister of Municipal Affairs was wrong in the statements he made here in the House a couple of weeks ago.

James Brown, who delivered this statement at the meeting of many municipal councillors of the area, had this to say, and I think it makes it very clear: "I wish to address some of the claims by Mr Leach. It would appear by the statements made that he has not been informed of, or has chosen to overlook, many of the facts in this government-dictated agenda here in Kent...."

"As to the understanding of the process, perhaps it is Mr Leach that should come up from the bottom, or down from the pedestal he has placed himself on as saviour of fair cities. This process he talks about is where one man comes into a community for a few weeks" — that's Dr Meyboom — "then makes a decision that cannot be appealed or questioned: a process that has never before been seen in Canada, or North America. It is certainly not democracy. I will refrain from using the term 'Tory jack-boot' even if it is closer to what is taking place here in Kent. What then do you call this process that removes my right to choose how I wish to be governed locally here in Kent? While they may not like these terms bestowed upon them, they are much more in tune with their actions."

He continues at length with many other misstatements the minister has made.

I will end with a statement made by Roy Wilkinson, deputy reeve of the town of Ridgetown, who says —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. The member for Northumberland.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL WATER ASSOCIATION

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Today I'd like to take a moment to congratulate Major Angus Read on his appointment as head of the Ontario Municipal Water Association.

The Ontario Municipal Water Association is comprised of elected and appointed officials who represent the municipal public water authorities in Ontario on matters related to the quality and supply of drinking water. It works to obtain uniform policies for rates, accounting and operations for all provincial and municipal water supplies.

Major Read brings a wealth of experience, strength and sincere commitment to his new role. His previous positions as first vice-president of the Ontario Municipal Water Association and as a former mayor of the town of Cobourg, when combined with 40 years of service in the Canadian Armed Forces and his current involvement with the Public Utilities Commission of Cobourg, speak to how well prepared Angus Read is for the challenges which his term of office with the Ontario Municipal Water Association will undoubtedly present. The coming year is sure to be a successful one for the association with this gentleman at the helm.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The Liberal caucus pleads with the Minister of Education to call the School Class Sizes Act. They want you, Minister, to call my bill, Bill 110.

You have appointed four expert panels to ensure that the fundamentals of high-quality education are maintained. The social development committee wants to help you do the job right. They want to be the fifth expert panel. They want you to call Bill 110 before their committee so that they and I can travel all across Ontario to find out what the real stakeholders in education want when it comes to class sizes. They want to hear from the students; they want to hear from the teachers; they want to hear from the parents. They want to hear from all the stakeholders in education because they want to ensure that you, Minister, ensure there is a quality in class size.

Maintaining class sizes as they are now is just unacceptable. Class sizes now are too large. We on this side of the House want to ensure that when you send out your expert panel, you will be hearing from the right people. That's why we challenge you, Minister: Call Bill 110. Call the School Class Sizes Act. If you have the courage to be a true Minister of Education, call it before the people of Ontario so that you can hear from them.

TORONTO BIKE WEEK

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Toronto Bike Week blasted off on Thursday, May 22, and continues throughout this week. There have been many activities around the city, including today's Bike to Work Day.

I joined with Jack Layton, Don River's Metro councillor, on the Danforth, where we met up with East Enders on Bikes. We proceeded on to Bloor and Yonge, where we joined with hundreds of other cyclists, including none other than the Minister of Environment himself. He was riding a pretty spiffy bike too, I must say. We all rode into Nathan Phillips Square and were treated to pancakes and coffee and the wit of CBC's Ralph Benmergui.

This is a great week to put your car away and take out the old bike. I've been cycling for years, and I highly recommend it. But please ride safely. Always be alert and obey the rules of the road. Do wear a helmet at all times.

To drivers out there: Keep an eye out at all times for cyclists, especially when making right turns and opening car doors. As someone who drives as well as cycles, I am attuned at all times to watch for bikes. But if you don't cycle yourself, you might forget. There have been some very tragic deaths in Toronto over the past few years, so I urge all drivers to be very, very careful.

Let's hear it for Bike Week in Toronto. Sometimes people on bikes are a bit late for important dates, so I take it you must have been riding your bike to work today, Mr Speaker.

QUEEN'S VISIT TO STRATFORD

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): A great honour has been bestowed upon the riding of Perth. Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, will tour through the city of Stratford in my riding of Perth next month.

Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh will officially open the newly renovated Stratford Festival Theatre. This is most appropriate when we consider that our Queen's illustrious ancestor, Elizabeth I, was the patron of William Shakespeare.

This stop marks the third occasion the city of Stratford has hosted the royal couple. In 1959 the Queen and Prince Philip attended the royal command performance of *As You Like It* in the Festival Theatre. In June 1973 thousands of people lined the platform of the CNR station in Stratford as the royal couple passed through on their way from Kitchener to London.

This is a momentous occasion for the people of the area. The riding of Perth and the city of Stratford are truly beautiful places and stand as shining examples of what it means to live in Ontario. The royal progress will provide the world with an opportunity to see this.

I'd like to invite all members of the House to come out to the riding of Perth and share in the royal excitement in June. God save the Queen.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): When is the government of Ontario going to pay its full share of property taxes to our local municipalities? In some communities such as mine, where one third of the properties are tax-exempt, a large number of properties — those owned by the province, the federal government and government-funded agencies and organizations — are not paying their fair share of local taxes.

For years the government's grant-in-lieu payments have been greatly deficient in the grants paid to local municipalities. Bill 106 was a perfect opportunity for the government to rectify this injustice. Not only did the government not do so, they also failed to support our Liberal amendment that would at least have kept the current payments in lieu of taxes in place.

The province should be paying its fair share of tax to our local municipalities. Instead, more tax exemptions are added for airport lands and conservation lands. The province will continue to pay no local taxes, and the greatest fear those affected municipalities have is that the payments in lieu will be cancelled as well.

When will the downloading and the dumping of services and costs on our local municipalities by the province stop? Property taxpayers beware. The government will be funding its tax cut on your backs.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): "Sault Ste Marie residents may pay more to ride the bus, swim in the municipal pool and take trash to the dump if city council gives the go-ahead Monday." That's tonight.

"The increased user fees are recommended by city staff to help generate revenue for the municipality in the wake of reduced provincial government funding." We shouldn't be surprised. This is out of the Saturday edition of the *Sault Star*, an article written by Linda Richardson.

This government's agenda of tax breaks for the rich, with municipal tax increases and increased user fees for the middle class, is the order of the day. But it doesn't end there. The next shoe to fall will be the contracting out or the privatizing of these services and, ultimately, those jobs.

Tonight at city council, members of CUPE in my community will be appealing to that august body not to

contract out their jobs. They know, as I do, that the only job creation program of this government is to take their jobs and turn them into two or three jobs; turn jobs that are well-paying, secure, long-term jobs into part-time, minimum-wage, no-benefits opportunities for people. That's no way to deal with communities, that's no way to treat people and it's no way to deliver services in this province, which is so rich and has such an excellent tradition of doing the right thing.

Speaker, will you appeal to the government with me to stop this terrible —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

1350

HUNTINGTON DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to announce that May has been proclaimed Huntington Disease Awareness Month by the Huntington Society of Canada.

Huntington's disease is a hereditary brain disorder which touches the life of one in 1,000 Canadians. Symptoms, which can include involuntary jerking, slurred speech and mental and emotional difficulties, usually begin between the ages of 30 and 45 and gradually worsen over the 10- to 25-year course of the disease, leading to death.

The Huntington Society is dedicated to the fight against Huntington disease through its three main programs of education, individual/family services and research. These goals are supported in communities throughout Canada by volunteer chapters and area representatives. In Ontario there are 18 volunteer chapters and area representatives of the society as well as three professionally staffed resource centres and eight support workers to help HD families.

The theme for Huntington Disease Awareness Month is "What is a champion?" The society's public awareness spokespersons, Olympic skier Edi Podivinsky and Linda, a person with Huntington disease, represent the champions in the fight against Huntington disease, those coping with the illness and supporting the cause.

I would ask each of the members to join me today in showing their support for the fight against Huntington disease.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Please join me in welcoming the 11th group of pages to serve in the 36th Parliament: Katherine Ball from Lake Nipigon; Lauren Consy from St Catharines-Brock; Kerry Dark from York East; Erin de Vreez from London Centre; Theresa Enright from Scarborough East; Katherine Fyfe from Middlesex; Marc-André Gougeon from Cochrane South; Mary Ann Guiao from Mississauga North; Andrew Hamer from Durham Centre; Meghan Martin from Huron; Nicholas Martin from Fort York; Paul McGrath from Wilson Heights; Dalton James McGuinty Jr from Ottawa South —

Interjections.

The Speaker: You could be jumping to conclusions, so just hang on.

Samir Murji from Scarborough Centre; Olayinka Owolabi from Brampton North; Tina Saxon from Welland-Thorold; Timothy Sayle from Simcoe East; Sean Simpson from Kitchener-Wilmot; Christie Thomson from Essex South; and Tobin Waterworth from Hastings-Peterborough. Please join me in welcoming them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TRUCKING SAFETY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, I want to talk to you about an issue which you have talked about for some time now. That, of course, is the issue of truck safety in Ontario. I want to quote back to you some of the things that you've said during the past several months.

Back in January of this year you said if safety was not your business, you would be out of business. "We are committed. I'm telling you, I'm going to get the job done." In February of this year you said, "Wheels separating from trucks is a very serious problem, one that shows no signs of improving and one that can't wait any longer." The following day you said, "We can't continue to accept this. It is a very serious problem."

It has now been almost two and a half years since Angela Worona was killed on Highway 401 by a flying truck tire. In March of this year Target '97 made its report to you and provided you with a number of recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, can we count on you to introduce truck safety legislation that will be law in this province before the summer?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I want to answer the honourable member that you can certainly count on this government's commitment to truck safety. We have been saying all along that truck safety is a priority.

I believe it was our intent, and the best of intent, to introduce the wheel separation bill sooner, because we felt we could get it through. Through some unfortunate situations that developed in the Legislature, we weren't able to do that, but I have every intention of introducing the comprehensive safety bill in the very near future.

Mr McGuinty: I will take that answer to mean that you will not have as law in this province before the summer, before the time when hundreds of thousands of Ontario families are going to take to our highways — that you will not have in place truck safety legislation.

What we've done to facilitate things for you, you will now be well aware, is that we are today introducing a bill. We're calling it the Worona, Tyrrell, Campbell and Jessiman Truck Safety Act. That's going to be introduced this afternoon and it's going to offer you the chance to support this bill in place of any other legislation you may be considering. That bill surely will be subject to some

improvements; it could go to committee. I am offering you here and now to deal with it in the most expeditious manner possible, because I feel we have an obligation to do whatever we reasonably can to make sure that our highways in Ontario are safe before the summer begins. Understanding that, will you support the bill we are going to be introducing this afternoon?

Hon Mr Palladini: Certainly the Legislature will make that decision on whether or not your bill gets supported. But I want to reinforce our commitment on truck safety, and I believe our record speaks for itself. When you take a look at the amount of vehicles we have stopped over the course of the year — 37,000 — that is nearly double the amount your party ever did when it was in government. When you take a look at what we have implemented in terms of the Worona — we've implemented 25 of the recommendations and some of the other recommendations are partially implemented. We are acting in the best interests of Ontarians, and we're going to prove that within the next few weeks.

I want to thank the honourable member for all the support he said he would give our bill. We're going to put you to the test very shortly. Hopefully, you won't change your mind and will support our bill as a whole.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): This answer is an answer of delay and stall, with incomplete responses. It was you, Minister, who said: "I ain't going away. The bad operators, they're going away." Rambo Palladini. "We will not stop until Ontario's roads are the safest in North America. If safety is not your business, you'll be out of business. We are committed. I'm telling you, I'm going to get the job done in the next 90 days."

That was 120-some-odd days ago. Tell me, what has changed? What has happened since February when you came out with your Bill 125? Was it a flawed bill? What circumstances led the Premier of Ontario to cut the legs right out from under you and leave you dangling in the wind on this issue? What has changed? Will you deal with our bill or bring in meaningful truck safety legislation to ensure that the roads of this province are safer for the summer driving seasons?

Hon Mr Palladini: The honourable member would want you to believe it was this government that has failed in introduction of that wheel separation bill. I believe the people of Ontario know where the fault lies. The fault lies with you; the fault lies with the NDP.

It was our intent to introduce this as part of our comprehensive safety bill. I would like to tell the honourable member that as far as the wheel separation bill is concerned, it will be reintroduced as part of the comprehensive safety bill as it was introduced: no changes. Absolute liability will remain as part of the comprehensive bill. We are going to do what we said we would do and we're going to continue to make sure that safety on Ontario roads is achieved.

1400

GAMBLING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I have a question about gambling in

the province in Ontario, particularly in so far as it relates to our young people.

A couple of weeks ago I was in Ottawa and there was a story on the news. They were interviewing a 13-year-old boy, complete with bubble gum, baseball cap and running shoes. He was telling the interviewer how on a regular basis he would visit the racetrack to gamble. I also learned — in fact, this morning we had a staffer visit a laundromat nearby, and there he picked up, from a vending machine, lottery tickets. That machine doesn't discriminate between an eight-year-old and an 38-year-old when it comes to the purchase of lottery tickets.

Minister, do you think it's right to make money from gambling off the backs of our young people in Ontario?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): In short, through Bill 75 we're trying to buttress up the provisions to make sure we don't have minors gambling. If you look at Bill 75, the penalties for anyone who is underage gambling with respect to the VLs, for example, are immense. We've doubled the penalties, in fact. An individual can get severe penalties, and corporations as well can have a penalty of up to \$250,000. I certainly agree that it's not good to have minors gambling.

Mr McGuinty: I want to drive this point home to make sure you understand its seriousness. Today in Ontario there are 13-year-olds who are visiting racetracks and gambling. There are 13-year-olds who are buying lottery tickets from unsupervised lottery vending machines in Ontario. The question is very simple: Do you think that's right? If you don't, what are you going to do to make sure it stops happening?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First of all, it's my understanding that the Ontario Racing Commission's policy is that minors are not permitted to gamble. Second, I can only reiterate that under Bill 75 we have increased the penalties for anyone gambling underage. If the Leader of the Opposition recollects, Bill 75 makes it an offence for anyone under the age of 18 to have access to the VLs. The fines are up to \$50,000 for an individual to allow this to happen, and corporate fines are up to \$250,000.

Mr McGuinty: This year your government is going to make \$1.5 billion in profits from gambling. Because your government is relying so much on gambling for its revenues, people in this province are getting hurt. I'm sure you are familiar with the story that played recently in the Ottawa Citizen that said there are people in this province who are sitting in front of gambling machines and actually soiling themselves because they cannot escape the grip of the powerful addiction of gambling.

What we're doing right now, whether you recognize it or not, is that we are targeting young people in Ontario. They are now being allowed, without penalty, to attend at racetracks and to gamble, and they're allowed to plop twonies and loonies into vending machines. You're telling me that you're not going to do anything about it. Is that right, or are you going to act immediately to ensure that this can't happen?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I guess there are two parts to that. First of all, with respect to people who have gambling problems, we'll be increasing the amount that goes towards treatment and education and research into these

areas, up to about \$9 million. When we looked at the three-day roving casinos, which the Peterson government brought in — I'm sure the Liberals are familiar with them — they addressed zero money towards problem gambling. At least the NDP brought in about \$1 million towards that when they brought in the casinos.

Under Bill 75, to sell a lottery product to anyone under the age of 18 is an offence. There are huge monetary penalties for doing this. Under previous governments of opposition parties, the most that would happen to someone who sold a ticket to a minor —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: — was that they would lose their authorization as a ticket agent. When you bring in stronger penalties it's going to help us enforce this against selling lottery products to minors.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

M. Gilles Pouliot (Lac Nipigon): Aujourd'hui, ma question s'adresse au ministre responsable des Affaires municipales. Within a few hours after routine proceedings today, we shall be voting on market value assessment, on Bill 106. Presently there are some 3,800,000 units across the province being reassessed. It's the largest undertaking ever in North America.

Minister, you've conducted some impact studies, because people will be severely and negatively impacted at the residential level and especially at the commercial level. Because we shall be voting in a few hours, why don't you release the impact studies that you have commissioned?

The people and the members of this House have the right to know what those impact studies demonstrate. Why don't you come clean, Minister, so that we will know exactly what we will be voting on in a few hours' time?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): In response to the member of the third party, it's called the Ontario fair assessment system and I think everybody would agree that it's a system that has to be put in place, that the system we currently have in Ontario is in shambles and the opposition parties, when they were in power, refused to do anything about it. So I think everybody would recognize that we have to deal with the outdated, outmoded assessment system in Ontario. This government is doing that.

I can tell you that it is going to bring fairness back into the system and those people who have been paying more than their fair share for many, many years are finally going to get justice. That's something that, for some reason, neither party across the floor had the courage to do when they were in power.

Mr Pouliot: Minister, it doesn't work any more. With respect, your old-style of pointing fingers at both the Liberals and the New Democratic Party — you've been the government for nearly two years now. You're the government, get it? People are asking questions. Get it again, Minister? Their municipal taxes are about to skyrocket. Those reeves and councils and mayors are under a state of seige, and yet you must have something to hide.

What about honesty? Try it. It may just work. You've proposed more than 30 amendments; it's clear that you don't know what you're doing. But the revolution is on track and that light at the end of the tunnel is that of the Common Sense Revolution which will devastate people.

Why don't you release, as a last chance, as a last resort, the impact study so that people can put a few dollars aside in their pocket to face the bill that you will directly send them within a year's time? When will you come clean, Minister? You have an opportunity to do it. Do it now.

Hon Mr Leach: To the member from the third party, he's absolutely right. We are the government and we are the government that's taking action, action that you didn't have the courage to do. We're bringing in a fair assessment process that will untangle just a terrible situation that is in place right now.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Hey, Al, remember this in the election? Remember this, Al? No market value.

Hon Mr Leach: We're not bringing in market value as the member for Oakwood indicates. We said that we wouldn't bring in market value. We're not bringing in market value. We're bringing in the Ontario fair assessment system, which is considerably different, and if the member for Oakwood knew what he was talking about, he would —

Mr Colle: "No market value," you said in the election.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Oakwood, I ask that you come to order, please. Thank you.

Hon Mr Leach: To the member from Nipigon, Nipigon, Nipi-something: The assessment system that we are bringing in will resolve the problems that have faced this province for the last 40 years.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to one of the most beleaguered ministers of this House, Minister Leach, and it's on the same topic. What the member for Nipigon was saying is, you have impact studies that you have done and you are not releasing them. That was his question. Twice he asked you, and you don't answer them. I don't understand why you don't answer simple questions.

My supplementary, again on the same topic, is this: You say you are a friend of small business, yet you are about to whack them with a tax increase. Small business is going to be whacked by this fairness bill with a 20% or so increase. Do you think the best way to inform small business people of this gift you are about to give them is to send the tax bill in the mail? Is that the way you propose to let them know about this, Minister?

Hon Mr Leach: About the only thing the member opposite said that was correct is that it was a fairness bill. It is a fairness bill and it's going to be fair not only to people who live in the residential areas but to people who live in apartments, who are charged four times the amount of tax now as somebody in a single-family dwelling.

It's going to be fair to small businesses. Fairness is something that small business hasn't seen in the last decade.

We are going to bring in a system that will ensure that those individuals and those property owners and those

business owners who have been paying more than their fair share for decades are finally going to get justice. Justice is something that this government is going to ensure takes place when we bring in the Ontario fair assessment system.

1410

ASSISTANCE TO DISABLED STUDENTS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Today marks the start of National Disabilities Access Week and we already have seen how your government has shamefully dragged its heels on the introduction of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. But now you are weakening the already tenuous accessibility that people with disabilities have to post-secondary education.

The changes to the Ontario student assistance program are making it harder for all part-time students to continue their studies, but many students with disabilities will also have an even more difficult time. These students with disabilities must now carry 40% of a full course load in order to be eligible for assistance under OSAP. That's up from 20% under the previous rules. You've said before that this is just a simple matter of harmonization with the federal rules, but you had some choices that you could make through this process of discussion and harmonization with the federal government. I'd like to know why you increased that requirement at all. Why not leave it at 20% to ensure that students with disabilities have access, despite the limitations that their disabilities may place on them?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I would think that for the member opposite this would be a rather easy question to answer, because what we have done as a government is put into place the agreement that your government made with the federal government as it relates to all part-time students in Ontario. So I'm surprised that you're surprised. This is your agreement, not ours.

Ms Lankin: In fact, Minister, you're wrong. The aspect with respect to part-time students — and this is one of the reasons why that agreement had never been signed, why Ontario is the last province to enter into the agreement — came as a complete surprise to people. People from the Council of Ontario Universities were shocked and they've asked you to delay that.

You must know that your answer that part-time students, for example, can apply to the Canada student loan program just isn't good enough. What you haven't told people when you've given that answer is that students under that program can only receive a maximum of \$4,000. They can't carry an outstanding balance more than \$4,000, so if they borrowed \$2,000 last year and \$2,000 this year, they have to pay it back before they can borrow for their third year of education. Interest starts to accrue the day the loan is negotiated, not six months after graduation like under OSAP. This is a double burden that you're placing on part-time students and particularly students with disabilities.

The Council of Ontario Universities has asked you to delay implementing these changes for part-time students

for one year. They want to do consultation and impact studies. Will you do that for part-time students in general and students with disabilities in particular?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, I'm a little surprised by this approach from the member opposite. This is an agreement that was made to coordinate the student assistance in Ontario with the federal plan that has come down. We've been doing that coordination since 1984, and despite what the member opposite has said, let's be clear: This agreement was negotiated by your government.

As far as the disabled in Ontario are concerned, I can tell you that every ministry in this government has a stellar record in protecting the rights and the futures of the people who are disabled in this province, including the Ministry of Education. As a matter of fact, as you may remember, in the budget we just started a new program for those who have learning disabilities in the post-secondary sector. This is a brand-new program, \$30 million to help those people.

We will continue to look for places to invest to make sure that the disabled in Ontario have every opportunity to succeed and to excel in education and everywhere else in our society. That's the record of this government.

Ms Lankin: Minister, that is nonsense. You have choices that you could make with respect to the treatment of part-time students. You already have a differentiation between the 60% rule and the 40% rule. What I'm saying to you is that's still too high a threshold for part-time students, in particular students with disabilities. You should return it to the 20%. The Ontario Council of Universities is asking you to delay implementation for a year to look at an impact study here. They're worried about what this means.

Your reference to the \$30 million in the budget for new programs, that's for development of programming. That is not money to students. We're talking about students with disabilities and their access to post-secondary education. Your government made a commitment in the Common Sense Revolution that you would do nothing to hurt persons with disabilities. This change hurts persons with disabilities. Will you delay implementation for one year? Do the impact studies. Do the right thing and ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Hon Mr Snobelen: In all honesty, the member opposite understands, I hope, that we are coordinating our programs with the federal programs. We have done that since 1984 with all different governments. Your government negotiated this particular approach with the federal government. We have already delayed implementation by one year. Because of difficulties we had last year, it was impossible to implement it. This announcement is made with all sorts of notification to the university community, some three years' worth, and consultations with the university community in Ontario and other universities across Canada. So I am surprised that the member opposite would rise on this question today.

This government has an enviable record in helping people with disabilities. We want to make sure that we are of every assistance. I will continue to talk to the universities in Ontario about making sure that disadvantaged and disabled people in Ontario have access to

excellent, quality programs in our universities and colleges. That's an objective of this government and we will meet it. But this is an agreement your government put together.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the minister for seniors. I'd like to ask you to tell this House how many months you think there are in a year.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I think the member is a graduate of a post-secondary institution in this province. He knows the answer to that quite well.

Mr Kennedy: Well, seniors in this province are confirmed in their belief that they can't get a straight answer from the minister.

We're asking you about the drug ripoff, the amount of money you're taking from seniors this year. On July 15 last year you sent a notification out that said they would pay a deductible of \$100 that would last for one year. Instead, you have given them an eight-and-a-half-month year, and you've taken \$30 million from seniors' limited incomes.

Try to answer this question straightforwardly as possible, because seniors are depending on you to look after their interests. Will you advocate, will you get your government to refund to the seniors the \$30 million in excess fees that your government ripped off from them by charging them on April 1 of this year instead of July 15? Minister, will you stand in your place and do that for us today for seniors?

Hon Mr Jackson: This government will continue to advocate for seniors by providing additional drugs to the drug plan, in which for years both the Liberals and the NDP reduced the total number of drugs available to seniors. Seniors were paying hundreds and hundreds of dollars for individual drugs on the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary.

I appreciate the Treasurer, the Premier and this entire government freeing up the additional dollars to ensure that we can put 400 new and expanded drugs on the Ontario drug benefit plan in this province for seniors and for persons with low incomes and disabilities in this province. It's a record we're very proud of.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a question for the Minister of Environment. Minister, you have an enormous environmental problem at the Pickering nuclear plant. Over the last 25 years, Hydro has been dumping more than 1,000 tonnes of toxic copper and zinc into Lake Ontario.

Normally, you would expect the environment ministry to spring into action upon hearing such news. But I have information that your ministry knew about this for at least a year. My question is, why did you not immediately inform the public and take action at once, once you became aware of this monumental, gross abuse of the environment?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): Actually, my ministry, as I found out

recently, was aware of this in 1989. For the last five years when your government was in place, the ministry was aware of this particular problem which exists out at Pickering.

We are concerned about this matter. As you know, Ontario Hydro is reviewing the emissions occurring at Pickering station with a view to replacing the condenser tubing, which is copper at the present time, which is of course present in many of our homes where water goes through. We're concerned about the loading of Lake Ontario with regard to this. But I want to assure you and every member of the public that the levels of copper and zinc in the cooling water discharged are 100 times lower than the Ontario drinking water quality standards.

1420

Ms Churley: I think that's a lousy answer. We've got information in front of us that these are toxic, persistent chemicals going into our water, which is well above an acceptable level.

In response to what you said about this being known since 1989, I've looked into this. It's clear that there was some information at that time; certainly our government didn't know anything about it.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Certainly not. It's very clear from the quotes I have here from a memo of April 1996. It says, "We're comfortably down the list for total copper releases." It goes on to say, "Pickering is probably third in Canada in releases to water." But then it says, "This would not be apparent in the Environment Canada database and unlikely to receive any media play."

Minister, it is very clear that there are certain people at Hydro who have been very carefully covering up this loading. That is very clear. I would like to ask you today what you are going to do about it.

Hon Mr Sterling: First of all, I want to make it clear to the people of Ontario that copper is not deemed a toxic pollutant in water. In fact, in terms of the commercial fishery, for instance, they add copper and zinc to supplement their diet. It's needed by those particular habitats.

As I mentioned before, Ontario Hydro is reviewing their emissions with regard to these plants, is looking at what is being discharged and is going to come forward within a month with their findings on that. I think it's only prudent for me to wait for that particular report and then take appropriate action at that time.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. As part of the 1997 Ontario budget, Finance Minister Eves announced on May 6 the creation of a 10-year, \$3-billion research and development fund. This fund, which will create a synergy with the public sector, encouraging them to partner with our top-notch universities and other research institutions, was very well received in my riding of Halton Centre. Minister, would you please outline for this House the objectives of the research and development fund?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'd like to say that one of the major objectives of the new R&D challenge

fund is to put R&D on a very fast track period for the next 10 years. The challenge fund represents a total of \$3 billion of research and development money for Ontario universities over this period. In fact, seven new tax measures in support of research and development and leading-edge innovation in Ontario were included in the budget. The budget R&D priority is going to result in the promotion of business and university partnerships, which are going to lead to more long-term economic growth and jobs.

I'm happy to say that I will be conducting an investment seminar to Boston tomorrow on the biotechnology industry, which wants to go down and spread the good word and say that Ontario indeed is open for R&D business in Ontario.

Mr Young: As a supplementary, I'd like to ask the minister to outline —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Welland-Thorold, you're out of order. Please come to order.

Interjection: He's not in his seat.

The Speaker: The member from Mississauga is right. You're also not in your seat.

Mr Young: As a supplementary, I'd like to ask the minister to outline the overall benefits of this exciting project.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'd like to give a short list of the benefits, if I could.

First of all, what we are going to do with this R&D encouragement is to keep our world-class research individuals in Ontario. That's very, very important. The second thing is that we will now be on the leading edge of various research projects in comparison to the rest of the world. Third, we're going to create state-of-the-art equipment and facilities in our province.

I think it's important to note that Ontario is the largest R&D participant in Canada, spending about 52% of all R&D expenditures, and the Ontario government currently supports research and development through the centres of excellence, major tax incentives, the R&D superallowance and the Ontario innovation tax credit. This government is doing a great deal so that our research and development will be paramount in the world.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It has to do with the bill we're dealing with this afternoon, the property tax bill.

A close examination of this bill shows that the definition of "market value" is identical to the definition of "current value." The reason I raise this is because you've said they are different, but your own act says this about current value: "current value" means the amount of money land would realize "if sold at arm's length by a willing seller to a willing buyer." Your definition of market value is exactly the same thing, Minister. The market value is the amount that land may be expected to realize if sold by a willing seller to a willing buyer. In

other words, current value and market value, according to your own laws, are identical. If they're identical, defined identically, isn't it reasonable that the public should expect that in fact they are identical, Minister?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'll refer the question to the Management Board chairman.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): The reason why I apparently am standing in this place at the present time is that this particular bill comes under the responsibility of the Minister of Finance. It's very disappointing that the official opposition doesn't understand that this is not a Ministry of Municipal Affairs bill; it's a Ministry of Finance bill. It's also disappointing to know that the official opposition doesn't understand that it's not market value assessment involved, that it's not actual value assessment involved, but it indeed is the Ontario fair assessment system.

The Ontario fair assessment system uses a component of actual value assessment but then it tailors that; it adds a number of other criteria. It adds the criteria of regular updates, three-year rolling average, property tax rates for farmers and woodlot owners that are considerably reduced, and it adds protection for low-income seniors and the disabled.

Mr Phillips: It's rather embarrassing that the government doesn't understand that according to your own laws, the definition of market value is identical to the definition of current value. The reason I raise all of this is because we are being asked to approve a bill in about an hour's time. I would go on to say I can understand why they have tried to weasel this, because Al Leach said, when the election was going on, "My party and I will never support the imposition of market value."

We have a law before us today; the definition of current value is identical to the definition of market value. I would say to the Minister again, can you tell the public why the definition of actual value and the definition of current value is identical in your law?

1430

Hon David Johnson: I'll say again that the assessment system that's going to be introduced is neither market value nor assessment value.

The member opposite misses the point. The point is that across the province of Ontario we have had different assessment systems. Indeed, here in Metropolitan Toronto there's an assessment system that was based on market value from the 1940s — considerably out of date, unfair, various residential property owners paying way more than they should pay, seniors paying more than they should pay, businesses paying more than they should pay.

What the Ministry of Finance is bringing in and we will be voting on this afternoon is a system which will be fair to all the municipal taxpayers across Ontario. It will allow the municipalities to phase it in. It will protect the low-income elderly, it will protect the disabled —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: — and it's what the municipalities have been asking for for years and years.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a question for the Minister of Environment. People living along the St Clair River from Sarnia down to Windsor are outraged by this government's plans to allow the discharge into the river of 3.4 billion litres of waste water from fertilizer manufacturing. The residents of the Walpole Island First Nation are among the most directly affected and they have opposed this discharge every step of the way. Now we learn that your cabinet minister has given approval to ICI, a multinational chemical corporation, to dump this waste water directly into the river.

Will you tell the people who live near the St Clair River why you are allowing the discharge of billions of litres of fertilizer waste into their water? Minister, please don't tell them that it's good for them, just like you told people that copper in their water is good for them to drink.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): Of course we're concerned with the people in the area of the ICI reservoir which is holding this waste. ICI, the company that was responsible for this particular waste, went through a long environmental process in order to deal with this particular waste. There was a hearing and there was an appeal. In both cases, the hearing and the appeal board upheld the plan to discharge this waste, as is being done, and there was an appeal to cabinet. Cabinet upheld the board which made the decision on the technical data, and I think that cabinet made the right decision in upholding the board.

Ms Churley: I don't think that the people who live near the St Clair River and the people who live on Walpole Island, in Windsor and around Lake Ontario are going to be satisfied with that answer. They're very worried about this.

Minister, I believe from both your answers today that your disdain for environmental protection is, if anything, getting worse. You've slashed all this money, over \$200 million, from your ministry. You don't even have enough enforcement officers left any more to tell us what kind of damage is being done.

I'm going to ask you again: Will you review this situation, will you find another way to deal with these billions of tons of fertilizer waste and give some assurances to the people who have to drink this water that you will find another way to deal with this process?

Hon Mr Sterling: My ministry officials are there testing the water as it is being discharged. This process is going to take some four and a half years to complete. It's unfortunate that this situation arose. It's unfortunate that the waste is there. But if I have a disdain for anything, my disdain is for not meeting the problem, dealing with the problem and disposing of the problem. That's what this government is about. We have gone through the proper environmental process. The engineers, the scientists have said, "This is the way to do it," and I prefer to follow their advice than a politician's advice.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Riverdale kept referring to ICI releasing water. ICI no longer owns the plant; it is now owned by Terra International. I would like to have the member for Riverdale check her facts.

Ms Churley: How much is it dumping now?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Riverdale.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I agree it wasn't a point of order.

RETRAINING AND EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. I was in my riding during constituency week and had many inquiries about funding for training. I'm told that the federal government has offered the province \$860 per unemployed worker in Ontario, while the province of Quebec will receive \$1,060 per worker. I'd like to know if you've heard anything from the federal government about treating Ontario fairly when it comes to the allocation of training dollars.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): Mr Speaker, normally it's procedure here to say, "Minister," and then the minister rises, but we'll just dispense with that formality now if that's all right with you.

The question the member asks is a serious question for the unemployed people in Ontario. We have written to the federal government on several occasions and had conversations about redressing this very serious situation. It is true that right now federally there's about \$860 available for an unemployed person for training in Ontario, while there's about \$1,060 available for a person who's unemployed to receive training in the province of Quebec.

It's simply unfair to the unemployed people in Ontario. We have been unwilling to enter into an agreement with the federal government until the federal government is willing to give the same opportunities to the unemployed people of Ontario that they've given to the unemployed in other provinces. It's something we've been firm about and something we'll continue to be firm about in negotiating with the federal government.

Mr Grimmett: It seems that the federal Liberal government is targeting the provinces for their budget reductions, instead of attacking duplication and overlap right in Ottawa. I understand that if we passed on Ottawa's cuts to our post-secondary students, they would have suffered a 34% reduction per student in Ontario. Could you comment on this situation and what the government has done to address this inequity?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm surprised that at this point in time there's not more quiet from the Liberal benches across, because the federal Liberal government has produced cuts that reduce the amount available for university students by about \$1,400 per student, for college students by about \$900 per student. While that has been going on, the province has increased the amount of money available through OSAP by \$150 million and we've recently announced the success of the student opportunity trust fund: half a billion dollars for the students of the future in Ontario.

We understand the need to reduce spending by government. I think people right across Ontario understand that. But while the federal Liberals have reduced spending by 40% to Ontario's health care and education, they have only cut 2% from their own bureaucracy. We think that's wrong. We think their priorities are wrong and it's time to address that.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Point of order, Mr Speaker: ICI sold the plant in 1996, but they're the ones who are still responsible for the cleanup. I thought the member for Lambton might like to know that.

1440

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last week you advised the public, through the press, that you will be bringing forward your own school bus safety bill before the end of June. You say that you will double the existing levels of fines on the first offence, up to \$2,000, and provide for possible jail terms on second and third offences.

Your staff briefed me just last week and indicated that no first offence should be higher than \$400 because it would be a disincentive to the police. You're playing the same game here as you did with the truck safety legislation. Why are you giving the impression to the public that offenders will be paying \$2,000 on a first offence when you have no intention of ticketing more than \$400?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I want to say to the member that I commended him for introducing his private member's bill, and I supported it. But I have difficulty understanding something. Members of his party, including the honourable member, have encouraged this government that the fines are too low and that we must increase the fines; that's the first thing I heard when I was appointed Minister of Transportation. Now the member is saying the fines are too high.

Mr Hoy: No, I didn't.

Hon Mr Palladini: Indirectly, the member is saying the fines are not going to be implemented by the police because they're too high. That's really what you're saying.

We have every intention of making sure that bus safety in Ontario is not going to be compromised. We are putting together strategies that will help ensure we get to that point. Just as I said to the honourable member last week, it is not acceptable to this government for one child to lose its life, not five in the last five years. We are going to do everything we can —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary, the member for Essex-Kent.

Mr Hoy: It was your staff, Minister, who said that fines higher than \$400 would be a disincentive to police. It was not my comment.

The public wants a bill strong enough that there will be no second and third offences. Your bill does not include vehicle liability, and we know from drivers and police that it's next to impossible to identify the driver and therefore get a conviction. It doesn't matter if you raise the fine levels to \$10,000. If you can't get the conviction, you can't get a fine or a jail term.

Whatever you do, I will continue to push for Bill 78. I don't believe you will even pass your own bill to impose jail terms. I am asking you directly: Will you give this House your guarantee today that your bill imposing automatic jail sentences will be passed by next month, as you promised?

Hon Mr Palladini: It's very disappointing that sometimes you can't do what you really would like to do, and how difficult it is to implement certain things that possibly are going to make a better contribution to safety. But I want to say to the member that we have every intention of making sure our kids are protected. We will do whatever it takes to make sure that happens. Unfortunately, it takes time.

I have also said that fines alone are not going to do it. I believe we have to have some education implemented and certainly other remedies that are going to be implemented with this government, because we are committed to safety. But we are going to do what it takes to make sure our roads are safe.

I agree with the honourable member. One life is too many. It's not right. It should not happen. We will work with the member to make sure that safety is not compromised on our highways.

PROTECTION OF JOBS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. It's nice to see you back in the province. Let me bring you up to date on an issue of some pressing concern.

There is a meat-packing plant in Etobicoke, Principal Marques, where about 300 workers could lose their jobs because the plant may be sold to a new owner who simply wants to close the plant down. There is another option: another buyer who would keep the plant open with the help of the workers and save those jobs. As it happens, the fate of those workers is in the hands of the federal Liberal government because the deal involves transfer of a cheese quota, which the federal government must approve.

The workers, however, are concerned that the Liberal concern for their jobs may be empty election rhetoric that will evaporate after June 2. What action will you take to demand that the Liberal government protect the jobs of these 300 workers in Etobicoke?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'd like to say to the member for Sault Ste Marie that we are never happy to hear of a plant changing or closing or whatever, but things do change in the business community and from time to time changes have to be made. They're usually made for economic reasons; nobody likes to do these things. I'm quite convinced that this is part of the ups and downs, but I'm happy to say that most of the things we've been hearing about are very much part of the ups.

I'd like, if I could, to note a few changes that have happened in this province recently. AlliedSignal Aerospace Canada in Etobicoke is now going to do renovations to create 75 direct engineering jobs, very high-skilled jobs, and there will be 270 new manufacturing

jobs created over the life of the project out there. Across the way they should know —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr Martin: These workers need a government willing to support them and work with them to save their jobs. If this government had been in power a few years ago, my community of Sault Ste Marie could never have saved the jobs at Algoma Steel or Provincial Papers. It was an NDP government that got involved and helped the workers save their jobs. Now it's the workers at Principal Marques who are looking to the Ontario government and to the federal Liberals. Are you willing to see those 300 jobs vanish while your government's target of creating 725,000 jobs seems farther and farther from reality? What will you do to help these workers?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I don't recall that the member for Sault Ste Marie's government created a great deal of new job creation in this province. As a matter of fact, after they had been in power there were 10,000 fewer people employed in this province than when they started.

Since we've been elected there have been 140,000 net new jobs created; in the last two months reporting, there have been 60,000 net new jobs. What we're doing in this province is creating the right climate. We are letting the business community know they can come here with lots of confidence so they will not suffer from surprises to their five-year plans. We have cut the income tax rate for individuals, as an example. For this member over there to stand up — I think we should just turn the clock back five years to see what they were doing during this period of time.

One last comment, if I may, Mr Speaker. The economist for the Royal Bank said —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I rise in the House today with a question for the minister without portfolio with responsibility for privatization regarding the privatization adviser's registry.

I read an article in the newspaper recently which questioned the purpose of the privatization adviser's registry. Could the minister please explain for me and the constituents of Scarborough Centre the function of the registry?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): The adviser's registry provides an opportunity whereby individuals can register with us in terms of assistance they may want to provide the privatization secretariat as it relates to potential privatization initiatives.

Those who are interested in providing advice to us in assessing the options and the relative merits of the privatization options for each candidate are indeed encouraged to register with the privatization secretariat so they can have a chance to participate in the advisory roles and be aware of information as it becomes available from the secretariat.

You should be aware that these advisory roles will continue to be awarded on the basis of a fully competitive and open process, and the registry is just one part of that process.

Mr Newman: The minister mentioned that there will be a competitive process for engaging advisers to review the options related to the candidates referred to the office of privatization. Has the competitive process of engaging advisers to review the candidates actually begun?

Hon Mr Sampson: The requests for proposals were in fact issued last week as it relates to two of the candidates I announced earlier this month. Those requests for proposals, or RFPs as they're called in the advisory world, relate to Ortech and the Province of Ontario Savings Office, and we intend to request from individuals, companies who are interested in helping us assess the options as it relates to various privatization options — we want their help; we need their help.

As I said in our framework rollout, part of the important process is to make sure we get the expert advice from the people who have helped governments deal with the costs of government bureaucracy and deal with assessing whether government businesses — and there are numerous government businesses — are more willing and more able to take advantage of private sector experience and expertise. So, as I said, the format has —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. New question.

1450

WATER AND SEWER SERVICES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, later today we're going to have final reading of Bill 107, the bill that you introduced. The bill has extensive public hearings. Consistently through the public hearings, group after group after group came forward and expressed great concern about the possibility of municipalities selling their water and sewer assets to the private sector.

As a result of the massive downloading, as a result of the huge tax increases that municipalities may face, the only real assets that the private sector is interested in are their water and sewer assets. As a result of ownership of those assets, it also then completely allows the private sector to set the water rates and sewer rates. We introduced an amendment at committee that your government members turned down that would prohibit municipalities from selling the water and sewer assets.

You, Minister, have said it's a bad idea. If you think it's such a bad idea, will you support an amendment that stops municipalities from selling their water and sewer assets to the private sector?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): As you know, the bill is now in third reading; it has passed the amendment stage. We took our particular stance because there was no evidence that municipalities were going to do this. There's no evidence to mistrust municipalities to do this. They have managed our water and sewage services over the past 100 years with the trust of the public, with the interest of the public at heart. I don't think that a provincial government should bear down on municipalities which have demonstrated in the past a responsibility to govern, a responsibility to be accountable to their electors and hold the sewer and water services in the public hands.

Mr Agostino: Simply, that's not good enough. I can't understand why you continue to allow the possibility. The reason it can occur, Minister, is that first of all, under Bill 26, you took away the option of referendum. The municipalities previous to that would have had to hold a public referendum to sell their water assets. We're not talking about a service that people have a choice in. We are clearly talking about an essential necessity of life here, Minister, and you through Bill 107 and your lack of action and your lack of guts in making the proper changes are opening the door to the private sector to own the water services in this province.

We have seen the experience in Britain. We have seen the disaster. We have seen what has happened in that country. Minister, again, why will you not do the right thing? Why do you continue to insist it's a bad idea but refuse to act and simply allow the possibility of homeowners, senior citizens, the disabled and Ontarians to be at the mercy of the private sector as a result of your downloading and as a result of your actions that will force municipalities to sell this essential service?

Do the right thing —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Hon Mr Sterling: I don't think a provincial government should react to any kind of notions that are put out into the public sphere that something in the future is going to happen, that something is going to happen in the future which hasn't happened over the last 100 years, that something is going to happen with regard to municipal government, that municipal councillors are not going to have any responsibility to the people any more.

I guess there's a big difference between my party and the two opposition parties. We trust the electorate. We trust the municipal governments to do the right thing. We believe that trust should be maintained. Every time there's an outrageous argument put forward, as the member opposite has, that we should react — we don't react like that. We are acting in a logical, competent manner to what the situation is.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, come to order. Minister.

Hon Mr Sterling: I believe that this government is putting forward in Bill 107 a very competent package, a package which in fact just returns to the remaining 25% of the municipalities their sewage and water services which they have already paid for. This is a logical step.

FAIR MUNICIPAL FINANCE ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE FINANCEMENT ÉQUITABLE DES MUNICIPALITÉS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government / Projet de loi 106, Loi concernant le financement des administrations locales.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Call in the members; it will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1455 to 1500.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Bassett, Isabel	Johnson, Bert	Saunderson, William
Beaubien, Marcel	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Boushy, Dave	Jordan, W. Leo	Smith, Bruce
Brown, Jim	Kells, Morley	Snobelen, John
Carroll, Jack	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Chudleigh, Ted	Leach, Al	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Leadston, Gary L.	Stewart, R. Gary
Danford, Harry	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Doyle, Ed	McLean, Allan K.	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Munro, Julia	Tsubouchi, David H.
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill	Turnbull, David
Fox, Gary	Mushinski, Marilyn	Vankoughnet, Bill
Froese, Tom	Newman, Dan	Villeneuve, Noble
Galt, Doug	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wetlaufer, Wayne
Grimmett, Bill	Palladini, Al	Witmer, Elizabeth
Guzzo, Garry J.	Parker, John L.	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Young, Terence H.
Harnick, Charles	Ross, Lillian	
Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Kennedy, Gerard	Morin, Gilles E.
Bartolucci, Rick	Kormos, Peter	North, Peter
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Patten, Richard
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Phillips, Gerry
Colle, Mike	Laughren, Floyd	Pouliot, Gilles
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	Pupatello, Sandra
Duncan, Dwight	Martin, Tony	Ramsay, David
Gerretsen, John	McGuinty, Dalton	Sergio, Mario
Gravelle, Michael	McLeod, Lyn	Silipo, Tony
Hoy, Pat	Miclash, Frank	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 58; the nays are 29.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature to it.

GAMBLING

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario. I'd just like to read it for the record.

"Whereas there is much well-documented evidence that the social and economic disadvantages of gambling far outweigh any apparent benefits;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, declare our opposition to the expansion of casinos and the installation of electronic gambling devices. Therefore, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to delay the implementation of Bill 75 and request that the province hold a binding referendum (in conjunction with the 1997 municipal elections) to determine the will of the people regarding the expansion of casinos and the installation of electronic gambling devices in Ontario."

It's signed by more than 15 constituents of Simcoe Centre.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): This is a petition against fingerprinting by Mike Harris.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, has proposed the fingerprinting of all Ontario citizens; and

"Whereas fingerprinting Ontarians was never promised in the Common Sense Revolution, or in his election campaign; and

"Whereas universal fingerprinting of Ontario citizens is a direct violation of basic civil rights and fundamental rights of privacy; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is intervening and intruding into all aspects of daily life, from megacities, user fees, rent controls, and market value taxes, which he never promised in the election campaign;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to oppose Mike Harris's plan to fingerprint Ontario citizens, and to respect their privacy and to stop creating a mega-government that does not respect the basic freedom and individuality of the citizens of Ontario."

I affix my fingerprint to this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition from Yvonne Korince from OPSEU Local 253 and Keppel-Sarawak school. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and failure to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's goal is to privatize necessary support services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence to the government in the province of Ontario."

RENT REGULATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has brought forth Bill 96, legislation which will effectively kill rent control in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris Conservative campaign literature during the York South by-election stated that rent control will continue; and

"Whereas tenant groups, students and seniors have pointed out that this legislation will hurt those who can least afford it, as it will cause higher rents across most markets in Ontario; and

"Whereas this Conservative proposal will reduce the stock of affordable housing and encourage landlords to harass long-term residents, pushing them to move out so new tenants paying higher rents can be brought in; and

"Whereas this Conservative proposal will make it easier for residents to be evicted from retirement care homes; and

"Whereas the Liberal caucus continues to believe that all tenants, and particularly the vulnerable in our society who live on fixed incomes, deserve the assurance of a maximum rent cap;

"We, the undersigned, demand that the Mike Harris Conservative government scrap its proposal to abandon and eliminate rent control and introduce legislation which will protect tenants in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

1510

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas we, the undersigned" — and I must point out there are 500 names on this petition — "support our

OPP and especially Sergeant Dean in their testimony and action taken at the Ipperwash park;

"We believe all of the OPP acted properly in their line of duty."

CLASS SIZE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is signed by people from all over Ontario. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci, MPP for Sudbury, which promotes smaller class sizes passed second reading; and

"Whereas this bill, called Bill 110, was referred to the social development committee; and

"Whereas we, the stakeholders in education, want the government committee to hear what we have to say about smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas we want to hear what the government committee has to say regarding smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas all people in Ontario have a right to speak to the social development committee about smaller class sizes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the recommendation that the social development committee travel across Ontario to find out what the students, parents, teachers and taxpayers of Ontario are saying about smaller class sizes and Bill 110, the smaller class sizes act."

Of course, I affix my signature to the petition, as I am in full agreement with it.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission appointed by the health minister has recommended closure of the London and St Thomas psychiatric hospitals; and

"Whereas psychiatric patients are being displaced without adequate support systems; and

"Whereas article 34(1) of the Mental Health Act states, 'A patient shall be discharged from a psychiatric facility when he is no longer in need of the observation, care and treatment provided therein'; and

"Whereas article 34(2) of the Mental Health Act states, 'Subsection (1) does not authorize the discharge into the community of a patient who is subject to detention otherwise under this act';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to retain psychiatric facilities separate from schedule 1 hospitals and managed by the Ministry of Health to ensure that no person will go untreated or will be placed at risk or cause another to be placed at risk."

I affix my signature thereto.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000; and

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services; and

"Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Minister of Health to provide the appropriate level of health care funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west-end community and to restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county."

I add my signature.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition brought forward by PUSH Northwest, People United for Self-Help, a group that had a press conference the week before last, trying to push for an Ontarians with Disabilities Act to be brought forward. I was proud to be part of that. I read this petition on behalf of Morgan Atkinson, Sandy Solamon and Marilyn Warf.

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario made a pre-election promise to pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act if elected; and

"Whereas the resolution introduced by Marion Boyd, MPP, on May 16, 1996, calling on the government to keep its election promise to pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act was unanimously supported; and

"Whereas no actions have been taken by the government in the direction of creating or passing an Ontarians with Disabilities Act; and

"Whereas persons with a disability in Ontario are not allowed equal rights or equal citizenship due to lack of access in areas including but not restricted to communication, transportation, housing, employment, education, and the cost of disability is all but ignored by the Ontario government;

"We, the undersigned, demand that Mike Harris and the Conservative government take measures to ensure the introduction and passage of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which is in accordance with the needs of persons with a disability in Ontario."

I have about 600 signatures and there are more to come.

HOUSING COOPERATIVES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a very timely petition here, especially in light of the downloading by the government of the social housing portfolio to local municipalities.

"A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has clearly indicated that it 'wants to get out of the housing business'; and

"Whereas the Ontario government is reviewing the legal contracts and budgets of every co-op housing project in the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has announced plans to make huge cuts to co-op and non-profit housing funding; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to replace affordable housing with subsidies to private landlords; and

"Whereas co-op housing is a proven success in providing affordable homes owned and managed by the people who live in them; and

"Whereas the actions of the Ontario government threaten to destroy stable, well-maintained communities which have been built over the last quarter of a century and the investment all Ontarians have made in this type of affordable social housing;

"We request that the Ontario government sit down with the co-op housing sector to negotiate a deal which will ensure the long-term financial viability of housing co-ops and the continuance of rent-geared-to-income assistance upon which thousands of co-op members depend and which will promote greater responsibility for administration by the co-op housing sector and less interference by the government in the day-to-day operations of housing co-ops."

I have signed the petition.

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas non-instructional staff of boards of education provide an important and essential service to schools in Ontario;

"Whereas the school system functions best, in the interest of its students, when all of its employees work in harmony and coordination and with the kind of expertise that comes with continuity, coordination and experience;

"Whereas Bill 104 encourages the privatization and outsourcing of non-instructional positions and the resulting loss of jobs, cutting of wages and salaries, and removal of employment benefits for people with comparatively moderate incomes;

"Whereas dedicated educational employees are having their lives severely disrupted so that the Conservative government of Mike Harris can finance an income tax cut that benefits the wealthiest people the most;

"We, the undersigned, request that Bill 104 be withdrawn and any future legislation not call for the outsourcing and privatization of educational jobs."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I'm in full agreement with it.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition sent to me by Diane Thompson with the Castlegreen cooperative in Thunder Bay, the model for all cooperatives in Canada, in fact. They are very concerned about

the downloading of non-profit housing on to the municipalities. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government has announced their intention to download non-profit cooperative and other forms of public housing on to municipalities; and

"Whereas all Ontarians have a basic right to fair and affordable shelter; and

"Whereas the government's downloading will result in municipalities being forced to privatize public housing, which will cause financial hardship and insecurity for the residents of these housing communities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has an obligation to the tenants of these housing communities in Thunder Bay and across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to disallow the downloading of public housing to municipalities without a full guarantee that such actions will not result in the loss or privatization of one single public housing unit in our community."

I am very proud to sign this petition.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have another petition here. It's actually signed on a number of different cards by people like Vivian Hodge and C.A. Pearce and Joe Gallivan, and it's addressed to Michael D. Harris, Premier of Ontario, and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"The citizens of Ontario and your Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation agree that this province has one of the great library systems in the world. This system has been built by citizens like me in every Ontario community serving on local library boards with the decision-making power to promote, protect and create libraries that respond to our own communities.

"I request that you guarantee in your new legislation citizen-majority library boards and free access to all library information resources, the foundation of lifelong education."

I have about 15 of these cards that I'd like to file right now.

1520

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Public Libraries Act to put authority, responsibility and accountability for providing and effectively managing local library services at the local level / *Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les bibliothèques publiques de façon à situer à l'échelon local les pouvoirs, la responsabilité et l'obligation de rendre compte concernant la fourniture et la gestion efficace des services locaux de bibliothèque.*

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed. Shall Bill 109 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WORONA, TYRRELL, CAMPBELL AND JESSIMAN TRUCK SAFETY ACT, 1997 LOI WORONA, TYRRELL, CAMPBELL ET JESSIMAN DE 1997 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES CAMIONS

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 133, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to improve truck safety / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant le Code de la route de manière à améliorer la sécurité des camions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): This bill acts on the government's recommendations of Target '97, a government task force that was approved by the government, so I call on the government for swift passage to this bill, which will help ensure that Ontario's roads are safer for this coming summer.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WATER AND SEWAGE SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES SERVICES D'EAU ET D'ÉGOUT

Mr Galt, on behalf of Mr Sterling, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to enact the Municipal Water and Sewage Transfer Act, 1997 and to amend other Acts with respect to water and sewage / Projet de loi 107, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 1997 sur le transfert des installations d'eau et d'égout aux municipalités et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui a trait à l'eau et aux eaux d'égout.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): This government is committed to finding the most efficient way to run our water and sewage systems, to ensure that Ontario's water and sewage infrastructure continues —

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the member. I just wanted to remind him that there was unanimous consent in the House for the time to be split as follows: Following the parliamentary assistant's introductory comments, the remaining time would be split between the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party, with the bell to begin at five to 6, the vote to take place at 6 o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): I need clarification. The agreement is that following the remarks by the parliamentary assistant the remaining time will be split between the opposition parties until five minutes to 6 for the vote. Are you deeming there be a recorded division required?

Ms Lankin: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed. The member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and it won't be necessary to set the clock back. We'll have lots of time.

This government is committed to finding the most efficient way to run our water and sewage systems, to ensure that Ontario's water and sewage infrastructure continues to deliver the high-quality services its people expect.

Today I am pleased to introduce for third reading the Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act. The act, known as Bill 107, received its first reading in January and has since been through second reading and the standing committee on resources development.

This new act has been developed in response to recommendations in December of last year by David Crombie's Who Does What panel. Its amendments will both clarify the role of government and improve accountability. It will give Ontario municipalities full title to provincially owned water and sewage treatment plants serving their communities and it will transfer responsibility to municipalities for septic system inspections and approvals.

It's worth noting that the legislation has been amended so that municipal responsibility for septic systems will not take effect before January 1, 1998. This will indeed give municipalities the time they need to gear up for these changes. That means that the installers and inspectors will be able to prepare for new, tougher guidelines and training requirements over the winter, which is the off season for septic systems installations.

This bill also introduces provisions to protect the taxpayers' best interests and investment and encourage continued public control of water and sewage works. Currently, there are no such measures to encourage continued public ownership. In the unlikely event that a municipality proposes to sell part or all of its waterworks to the private sector, it will be required under this legislation to repay all provincial capital grants received since 1978. Again, there is currently no such protection.

Also, once the act is in effect municipalities, which already own three quarters of the treatment facilities in Ontario, will be the sole level of government that holds title to water and sewage plants in Ontario. As a result, the province will no longer be in the ambiguous and sometimes conflicting position of being the operator, regulator, owner and funder of these essential services. It will be able to focus on its most important role, that of setting and enforcing tough performance standards.

It is also important to note that all plants transferred to municipalities will be in compliance with their existing certificates of approval. Furthermore, this bill will not affect operating contracts between municipalities and the Ontario Clean Water Agency.

As I have said earlier, under this legislation municipalities will now become formally responsible for septic system inspections and approvals. We intend to ensure that public health and the environment are protected through tough rules for septic systems installation and their operation. Those who will do this work will have to meet stringent competency requirements that will be set through provincial regulation.

1530

We will use the transition period between now and January, when the Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act will take effect, to make sure that municipalities have the mechanisms in place to deliver this local service. It will also provide sufficient time for training so that inspectors will be able to meet the new higher standards of professionalism that we are putting in place.

Higher-quality work will mean better protection for the environment, which is of course the most important goal of this act. I am confident that the Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act meets this goal and at the same time improves service delivery to the people of Ontario.

Through the Environmental Protection Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act, we will continue to protect public health and the environment. We will do this by setting and enforcing sound environmental and health standards for the operation of water and sewage treatment plants as well as for septic system installation and operation. In addition, the government is exploring ways to help smaller municipalities that have specific needs or challenges to meet Ontario's environmental protection and public health standards. My colleague the Minister of Finance has committed some \$200 million from this year's budget to help achieve this.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of the resources development committee and its Chair, Brenda Elliott, as well as those individuals and organizations which made the time to appear before the committee to submit their thoughts. Their comments were indeed informative and most helpful in formulating amendments for Bill 107 following second reading and developing it for third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): In responding to my colleague from Northumberland, first of all, in his speech he didn't talk about the government's inadequate record on the overall environment and how this fits into that. He didn't talk about the necessity of protecting the selloff of these valuable assets from municipalities to the private sector. We've seen that happen in other jurisdictions. He didn't talk about the fact that Bill 107 is part of the government's giant megacity announcements that occurred in January, nor did he mention the fact that this is one of the pieces of legislation that unfortunately has survived the subsequent reaction to those announcements.

It's the view of the official opposition that this bill is seriously flawed for a variety of reasons. First, you did not prohibit municipalities from selling off their water assets. The second point is that given all of the other responsibilities you've downloaded on to municipalities, you didn't note the high cost of assuming the debt and maintaining and repairing the water and sewage treatment plants. Municipalities may be forced to sell these plants to the highest bidder. Finally, the member did not mention that their government has cut one third of the staff and one third of the budget from the Ministry of Environment, so even if those plants are in compliance with their certificates at the time they're disposed of to

the municipality, there's absolutely no guarantee that this will continue on in the future.

In summation, while there are many points of contention in the bill, we think those four are the most important and we welcome the opportunity to hear the government address them directly.

Ms Lankin: I think the thing that troubles me the most with respect to this piece of legislation is the intent which we believe is behind the government's legislation, the intent to allow municipalities to sell off the supply and control and monitoring and all the safety checks with respect to water and sewer management in the province.

I can think of no aspect of our environmental life that is more important than the water that we drink, the air that we breathe, the contaminations, through the way in which water is treated and sewer is treated, which can get into both of those things. As we look for the maintenance of a healthy community, a healthy province, we must be most concerned with the quality of our province's drinking water.

We only have to look at jurisdictions which have moved to the privatization of water resources to see the disaster that has occurred, and I want to believe that every member of this Legislature would do everything they could to prohibit that from occurring here in Ontario. The most simple thing would be to put that kind of guarantee in the legislation, but the government has refused to do that.

While they say that this bill is not about privatization, their refusal to put that kind of protection in the legislation leaves one with the only possible answer to them that if you're not prepared to put protection in to stop it, you must be prepared to let it go forward. I think we all must worry about that; we all must be concerned. At a time of the downloading of costs to municipalities, which are going to be forced to look at selling off assets, this is just a gold mine sitting there waiting for them, and I urge the government to reconsider that aspect.

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): I support this bill. After 20 years of experience in municipal politics, I see a time when we can transfer the responsibility to the municipalities to be more cost-effective and do a better job of handling the procedure. For example, with septic approvals, I think it's a one-window effect where we can have a municipality have a person qualified and there will be proper training for this person to handle the septic approvals along with the building approvals and the plumbing approvals that have to be done. That way we can have someone who is affected follow up and follow the needs of what has to be done at the time of building.

The other thing is with the water, I think it's very important that municipalities should be making the decisions as to where they want effective water lines and how they're installed, and they have a better indication of where they're going with it to make it more effective for the people of the community. On that account, I would like to say that I put my full support behind this bill for the purpose of the betterment of the community.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): It was very interesting listening to the last speaker, because he and I are from the same part of Ontario and he makes

it sound as if this bill just talks about who can install or who controls the inspection of septic systems. I may agree with him. There may be certain situations in certain municipalities where the expertise that a local building inspector has may very well also be in a position to inspect the septic tank system, and that can be done by one person, no problem at all. But that isn't what this bill is about. What this bill is about is it allows municipalities to sell off their systems.

It's very interesting. The Minister of Environment refuses to put a section in the act that clearly states that a municipality cannot sell a municipal service. The minister says, "Municipalities are telling us they won't do it anyway." That's not the point. The point is we want a protection, we want a guarantee that municipalities will not be able to do that. The mere fact that you're not willing to put that kind of guarantee in the legislation can only lead people to one conclusion: there will be certain situations and certain circumstances in which municipalities will be selling off their water plants. That will be to the detriment, in my opinion, of the people of Ontario.

The other thing that's very interesting is that these transfers of the 25% of the systems that are still owned by the province are not negotiable. Municipalities have to take them whether they like it or not. You've got to remember that in most of these situations these plants have been built, where the province completely funded them, in situations where the local municipalities simply could never have afforded to build those kinds of systems with their own resources. In other words, we're basically talking about smaller systems in municipalities that can least afford to buy the systems and so they are most likely to be privatized as soon as possible. That's the real situation we're dealing with in this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Northumberland.

1540

Mr Galt: As I listen to the various members responding, particularly from the opposition benches, they're developing a pseudo-enemy; they're out there trying to find something to fight when in fact there is no enemy out there, but they're managing to create one.

They often refer to the British system and they talk about privatizing when in fact their governments had an opportunity to do something to ensure that these plants wouldn't be privatized but didn't do anything. We come along with Bill 107 and we are doing something. We're putting in place that all grants since 1978 must be returned. That's a pretty big deterrent, particularly if that grant amounted to some 85% of the actual plant. I think that is a real deterrent and those plants won't be privatized.

I can assure the members opposite that we looked at the British system. We saw what happened, that it ended up being privatized wholesale. Let me tell you that the step the previous government took to move some 25% of the plants here in Ontario out to OCWA was the first step to massive privatization. That's where it was headed through an organization like OCWA, very simply one more step.

What we're doing is taking the step to prevent that from happening. It's all going to the municipalities, and

then it's in the hands of the government that is closest to the people.

I appreciate the comments of the member for Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings about the one-window approach to handling building and building lots and homes, particularly in the country. That's really what this was all about, to streamline and to ensure that those people installing and inspecting were properly trained. As a matter of fact, the amendments we brought in ensure that there has to be a trained installer onsite when they're actually installing a septic tank.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise to address Bill 107, what I see as probably more flawed for what it doesn't contain than what it actually does contain. When you look at Bill 107 in isolation, it seems harmless. All the bill itself does is simply transfer ownership of the other 25% to the municipalities and allow some other provisions for septic tanks. On its own the bill, when you look at it in isolation, doesn't seem that bad.

The reality is that you can't look at this bill simply in isolation. You have to look at this bill with the full picture of what has happened in the past two years since this government has taken office. You have to look at this bill and what happened through Bill 26. Previous to the introduction of Bill 26 by this government, there was a provision in legislation that forced municipalities to hold public referendums if they were considering selling any of their water or sewer services. Previous to this government bringing in Bill 26, the taxpayers had some protection.

The Tory government, the great believers in referendums, the great believers in public input — if you look at the Common Sense Revolution, it keeps talking about referendums, it talks about the taxpayers and the impact and so on — this is the same government that through Bill 26 took away that one tool municipalities had.

I find it so ironic that you run on a question of public referendums for everything. If you look, tax increases, referendums; balanced budget, referendums; on and on. The Preston Mannings of the provincial government here keep talking about referendums, and then through Bill 26 you took that provision away.

You then followed with the most massive dumping and downloading in the history of this province. Not only did you take away that one tool taxpayers had, public referendums, on this particular issue; you then turned around and downloaded on to municipalities like no government in the history of this province ever has. You've put municipalities in a position they have never faced in their history before. You've put municipalities in a position where they're going to be forced to look at 20%, 30% and 40% tax increases as a result of your dumping.

You look at the big picture and you look at Bill 26, what you did there, you look at the dumping, and then you question why the opposition raises the spectre of private ownership of water and sewer services. It is very clear: because you have put municipalities in a position where their only real asset of value to the private sector is water and sewer services.

Nobody is going to want to buy a transit system that loses money. What are they going to charge, \$10 or \$15

a ride so they can make money? You won't have any riders. Who is going to take over the social services system? Who is going to want to take over a health department? No one in the private sector. But there will be a lineup miles long if you put water and sewer services up for sale. It is an essential service; everyone must use the service. It is a monopoly. Very clearly it is the only asset municipalities can use to leverage and sell against the massive tax increases you're going to force them into.

When my colleagues across the floor question why it has never happened and why previous governments didn't act, it is very simple: because previous governments, including the Tory government of Bill Davis and so on, never ever brought that type of massive downloading on to municipalities, and the protection was always there through public referendums. You took both of those options away. You very clearly took away the possibility that taxpayers have some control over whether they want the private sector or the government to control water and sewer.

We saw the experience in Great Britain. We saw the disaster. That started innocently enough as well. The Margaret Thatchers of this world thought it was wonderful: better service, competition, all those wonderful buzzwords you use when you talk about privatizing services. But we are talking about an essential service here; we're not talking about something people can choose to do without. We are talking about something every single citizen in Ontario is going to need every single day, every single hour of the day.

You are opening the door to this being turned over to the private sector. You have refused to bring in legislation along with Bill 107 that will prohibit municipalities. I find it ironic that the minister himself says, "I do not think any municipality would be foolish enough to privatize, because I do not think that's where the general public is at on those kinds of assets." Very clearly the minister believes it's a bad idea. However, the same minister refuses to take action that would prohibit it.

All it would have taken through the public hearings and the amendment process was one very simple amendment to the legislation, an amendment that would have prohibited municipalities from selling their water and sewer assets to the private sector. It's very simple — end of debate, end of discussion. It would have made it very difficult for anyone to oppose this bill.

Every single group that came forward to public hearings — which were frankly a sham, because you didn't listen — including your business friends, including the private sector, people involved in this business, said, "We don't think it's in the best interests of the taxpayers to privatize water and sewer services." But you ignored every single group that came to the public hearings that told you to amend the legislation. You chose not to do that, because obviously the lobby, the business interests, your corporate friends, want this opportunity.

One can only imagine how much money can be made by the private sector if you allow water and sewer to be privatized. We saw what happened in Great Britain. People say, "It can't happen here." Why can it not happen here? You have nothing in legislation to prohibit it

from happening here. We saw massive increases in water and sewer rates. We saw massive increases in bad water, contaminated water, and illness as a result of that water. The experience was an absolute disaster and everything you have done here has allowed the possibility for that same disaster to be repeated here in Ontario. I cannot imagine a government that would be irresponsible enough to allow that to happen and simply leave it on good faith, to hope that a municipality doesn't do that. I just cannot imagine why you would not have taken the steps that every single group that came to the public hearings wanted you to take, and that was to prohibit this.

1550

If it is such a bad idea, and every single member of the committee — what's also interesting is that through all of the public hearings, all of the debate at committee level, not one Conservative member said it was a good idea to privatize water and sewer, not one member on the government side of the House. But not one member had the guts to support opposition amendments that would prohibit that, because the whiz kids in the Premier's office were pulling their strings. They said, "You can't do that; the marching orders are this and to hell with the public interest," because the private interest is more important to this government than the public interest.

If that was not the case, you would have taken the steps to eliminate that possibility. Why would you leave it open? Why would you take that gamble? Why would you take that risk? The biggest joke in all of this is the provision you've put in there. You said the protection we have is that if municipalities sell the assets — and let's remember, when you're talking about selling the assets of water and sewer services, you're also talking about losing control of the rates, and that is the key in all of this. They said the protection is there. The protection is that all of the grants that have been paid to that municipality to build those services since the mid-1970s have to be paid back; no interest on it, but they have to pay it back.

That's a joke because there's so much money to be made that the private sector will simply put that into the cost. If you have given a municipality a \$50-million grant to build a facility over the years, simply the cost of selling that facility to the private sector will be added to by \$50 million. And you know what? The private sector will pay that, because as we saw from the British example, there's money to be made hand over fist if you're willing to exploit the public and put the public at the mercy of the private sector.

You can't look at this legislation in isolation from this government's lack of commitment to the environment. Since this government has taken office it has continued, by every single step it has taken, to put environmental protection on the back burner. You have cut the ministry budget by \$121 million. You have cut \$10 million out of next year's budget. You have cut by 30% the staff of your ministry. When it comes to monitoring environmental impacts across Ontario, you have cut monitoring stations by 39%. We have 13 communities today in Ontario without air monitoring stations. Odour and dust complaints have been reduced to nuisance complaints by your government.

Enforcement and prosecutions are an absolute joke. Since your government has taken office, we have had a massive decrease in the number of charges laid to environmental polluters in this province and we have had a massive decrease in the number of prosecutions. Is it because all of a sudden the private sector have become wonderful corporate citizens and no longer pollute the air and the water in this province, or is it because you don't have the staff to enforce that any more? Is it because you no longer have the inspectors? Is it because you don't have the monitoring stations? Very clearly, this government likes to talk the talk when it comes to environmental protection but it has not been able to walk the walk.

A clear example: A few days ago the Minister of Environment was in Hamilton announcing standards for PM-10, which is a dust particle that causes approximately 25 deaths a year in my own community and hundreds of deaths across Ontario. The government has now brought in a standard for that. They've said you can't exceed the standard, but they have not brought in one mechanism for monitoring those standards. They have not brought in one single new enforcement officer to help those standards.

They've brought standards in but there's no mechanism enforcing them. It's like putting a speed limit on a highway and saying: "Here's the speed limit for this road, but you know what? We have taken the OPP officers off that road and we have taken the radar mechanism off that road. There's a speed limit there but we have no way of enforcing it." That's exactly what is going to happen here if water and sewer services are turned over to the private sector. You're going to lose control —

The Acting Speaker: Could I ask the member for Hamilton East to take his seat just for a second. Could you stop the clock, please. I'd like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today the Honourable Dr Denzil L. Douglas, Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis. Please join me in welcoming our guest. Welcome.

Thank you, member for Hamilton East. You may continue.

Mr Agostino: I add my welcome as well.

As I said earlier, your lack of commitment to the environment leads us to mistrust greatly what you're doing here with this bill today. You have absolutely no commitment to environmental protection in this province. You have absolutely no commitment to environmental standards and your track record has said that. You're allowing the possibility of the privatization of water and sewer services. You're allowing the possibility of decisions being made on water rates across Ontario to be decided not by local councils in the public interest but by the private sector.

Decisions are then to be made in a boardroom somewhere on Bay Street or Wall Street and decisions are to be made on what you charge for drinking water based on the bottom line and based on the will of the investors in that particular private corporation. That takes over the public interest. There is something fundamentally wrong in government when you bring in legislation that allows the private interest to override the public interest. We have seen the experiences.

I talked about the British example. Let me tell you what happened in case government members are not quite aware of what happened when the British brainwave decided that they were going to privatize water services there. They had a 600% increase in the outbreaks of dysentery illnesses as a result of contaminated water. Hepatitis A increased by 200%. Average residential rates went from \$96 a year to \$460 a year. This was the great British experience that you are opening the door to today by allowing this piece of legislation to go through the way it is.

Let me tell you what some of the speakers said, because some of the members were not at the committee; the members who were at the committee obviously didn't listen or pay any attention to the individuals who came forward and spoke, because if you had listened to any of the groups, it was unanimous. It was something everybody agreed on. That was so ironic. Every single group, as I said earlier, suggested that it was a bad idea to allow the possibility of private ownership of water and services — every single group. But you didn't listen to them. So let me remind you of some of the things they said.

From the executive director of the Ontario Municipal Water Association, Don Black: "We believe the future of Ontario's water is in jeopardy. The government is opening the floodgate to the irreversible deterioration of public waterworks in Ontario."

The Canadian Environmental Law Association: "It is the conclusion of the Canadian Environmental Law Association and Great Lakes United that Bill 107 is fundamentally flawed and is unsupportable in principle and in practice."

CUPE's submission: "CUPE represents thousands of employees in the water industry throughout Ontario. Our members work as technical and clerical workers in dozens of water and sewage treatment plants throughout Ontario. As workers, we fear" what will happen "as a result of privatization. As ratepayers, we fear" what will happen as a result of "the increased costs of water and the decreased quality resulting from privatization."

In poll after poll — and you like polls. You ran the whole election on polls. You hit all the hot buttons. You went after welfare because the polls told you it was a good idea. You went after employment equity because the polls told you it was a good idea. You like pushing those hot buttons. You like governing by opinion polls. I wish in this case you would listen, because opinion polls have told us time after time that up to 85% of taxpayers in Ontario are opposed to the privatization of water.

Why don't you do what is right, why don't you do what is honourable, why don't you do what is in the public interest today? That is, vote against this bill and reject this flawed piece of legislation so we're not haunted and have to look back years from now at the British experience and ask: "Why didn't we learn from that? Why did we allow ourselves to get caught in such a situation that has caused so much damage to the people of Ontario whom we represent?"

In closing, I ask the government members to have the courage to do what is in the best interests of your taxpayers. By voting in favour of this bill today, you're

going to say, "We agree to privatizing water in Ontario." By voting in favour of this bill, you're telling your constituents that the Tory government believes that the private sector can have control of what we pay for water services; that the private sector can determine whether senior citizens on a fixed income can afford to continue to have water running into their home; that Wall Street or Bay Street will set our water rates.

If you support this bill, you're telling your constituents that you think it's okay and acceptable for the private sector to own the water services in Ontario. I think that is wrong, I think that is disgraceful, and I would ask the government members to have the courage today to stand up on behalf of the people they represent, say no to this bill and protect the public interest and not the private interest, for a change.

1600

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I want to spend a few moments on Bill 107, which is grotesquely named the Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act. I say "grotesquely" because at no point during the hearings did government members ever indicate how this would improve water and sewage services.

I'm also somewhat puzzled that the parliamentary assistant, the member for Northumberland, is not here for the debate this afternoon. I find that very strange, because he attended the committee hearings and listened to what people had to say. I am somewhat taken aback that he isn't here.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I don't think it's appropriate to comment on the absence of a member from the House.

Mr Laughren: I don't care what you think is appropriate. The fact is that the member for Northumberland is not here this afternoon, and he should be, to take part in this debate. You can take your precious opinion and put it where the sun doesn't shine, because it's got nothing to do with —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Member for Nickel Belt, you are one of the oldest pros in the House. We just don't refer to someone when they're not in the House. I think you know that.

Mr Duncan: A point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nickel Belt.

Mr Laughren: Speaker, I would wish to withdraw my earlier comment about the sun shining — or not, whichever the case may be — but I must say I was provoked and I was taken aback.

Ms Lankin: Mr Galt was in a meeting with me.

Mr Laughren: His responsibility is in this chamber. That doesn't alter the fact that I'm still unhappy that he's not here.

I wanted to take part in this debate on Bill 107 because I sat on the committee that held hearings on this in London and in Toronto and there was a great deal of interest

expressed in this bill. When you look at the wording in the bill, you have to understand that a lot of people who are not used to reading legislation such as this nevertheless realized that something was going on here that could affect something that's very important to them.

We heard from people in London and Toronto who expressed a great deal of concern about what the government was up to here. Deputant after deputant came before the committee and expressed a concern about what happened in other jurisdictions when water and sewer services were privatized. We asked the government members of the committee, "Could you please tell us some examples of where it was a very good thing, that when water and sewer were privatized the people got better service, higher quality and lower costs?" Not one single example was offered, despite the fact that people came before the committee and gave us many examples of how service had deteriorated and costs had skyrocketed when the service was privatized.

I thought there was an obligation on the part of government to bring forward some examples of why they were doing this, some examples of jurisdictions where it worked so well. We didn't get one example, as I recall. Why not? Don't you think the people of this province deserve that? You owe that much to them, for heaven's sake, but they got absolutely nothing.

What was also very clear is that nobody was being kidded by what the real agenda here is, which is to download sewer and water services on to the municipalities, then put the squeeze on the municipalities, which will be looking for every penny they can achieve; then they'll be selling off these services because you put the squeeze on them and you've given them ownership of these services. That was very clear to most people who appeared before the committee.

Also, people who came before the committee — I know how we get information here as MPPs, but I often wonder how the average citizen out there is able to get hold of so much information. They had information on the polls that were done that showed that 76% of the people in this province are opposed to the privatization of our sewer and water services. It's amazing how they get information, amazing how many of them were aware of the critical situation in Great Britain, where it was a disaster and continues to be a disaster as a result of the privatization of sewer and water services — an absolute disaster. There is all sorts of documented evidence of what happened in Great Britain. You say to yourself, "What's going on here?" And people were saying, "Why are you doing this when the evidence is that it doesn't work well?"

That is why I think in this debate this afternoon — and third reading debates are really supposed to be about why this bill should not be now read for a third time, as opposed to a substantial debate.

Interjection.

Mr Laughren: Yes, that's technically the reason we have third reading debates. I think this bill should not receive third reading now, because the government hasn't answered very many of the questions that were put to them by people who came before the committee or by the members of the committee. I thought the member for

Hamilton East did a good job on that committee; he raised a lot of important questions but didn't get the answers. It seems to me that for that reason alone, this bill should not now be read a third time.

One of the issues people were concerned about was the whole issue of a referendum. Why not, since this government is very big on referenda? At least they were at one time, but they ignored the one in Metro Toronto on amalgamation. They would not put into this bill a requirement that before a municipality is allowed to privatize its services, they must hold a local referendum to see what the people want. Did the government accept that? No. It wouldn't accept any of these amendments. Why? What are you afraid of? You're big on grass roots and local control and local responsibility. Why don't you give the people at the local level the right to have a referendum on whether their local services should be or could be privatized? But you wouldn't do that, any more than you'd listen to the results of the referendum in Metro Toronto on amalgamation.

1610

You're talking out of both sides of your mouth when it comes to referenda. You're saying, "We like referenda; we'll bring in legislation for a referendum." But then when it comes time to test you on it, to call you on it, you run and hide. You don't have the courage of your rhetoric. You say you want referenda, but then you won't put it in the bill that says, "No municipality can privatize their sewer and water services until a local referendum has been held." You won't do that. Why not? We didn't get any answers to that question in the committee. It seems to me that's not an unreasonable request that was put to the committee.

People who came before the committee were concerned about the whole issue of public health if sewer and water are privatized. They were concerned as well about conservation. I'd like to speak for a moment about conservation. If the government allows a sewer and water service to be privatized and a company now owns the sewer and water service in that particular municipality, what is the incentive for that particular company to engage in water conservation? The more they sell, the more they make. So tell me, what's the incentive for conservation?

When it's non-profit at a municipal or provincial level, there's no incentive to sell more, because it's non-profit. If you turn it over to the private sector, what kind of entrepreneur worth his or her salt is not going to try and sell more water? Why wouldn't they? What kind of entrepreneur are they if they don't want to sell more of their product? They're not an entrepreneur worthy of calling themselves such. I can't understand why the Tories, the party of entrepreneurs, can stand up and say they are not concerned about conservation of water at the same time they're selling it off to the private sector. They cannot make that argument, and they didn't in committee.

The parliamentary assistant had all sorts of opportunities to answer the question on a referendum and to accept an amendment on a referendum, to answer the question on conservation. There were no answers. They just sat there like trained seals and obeyed the orders from on top that no amendments were going to be

accepted in the committee. Why did you waste the taxpayers' money holding public hearings, if you weren't going to accept amendments? Can you answer that question? You wasted taxpayers' money.

You're supposed to be the people who are guardians of the taxpayers. You try and sell yourself that way. But what do you do? You hold public hearings to get input from the public and then have clause-by-clause debate and ignore every suggestion that came from the public and ignore and reject virtually every meaningful amendment that was put by the opposition. So why did you waste money by holding public hearings when you had absolutely no intention of accepting any amendments?

That is something that puzzles me and it seems to me that you owe an explanation to the taxpayers of this province as to why you would spend the money on holding public — because it costs money to travel to London and take the entourage of the committee to London. Back here in Toronto it costs money to run these things. As a matter of fact, when the filibuster on amalgamation was going on, you were ranting and raving about how much money it costs to run these kinds of affairs.

Suddenly, when it suits your purpose, you don't bother; it doesn't worry you at all. You just sit there and stonewall and say: "No, we've got our marching orders. We're not accepting amendments." That's what you said: "We're not accepting amendments." That seems to me not to be the way this place should work, and I don't think it's the way the citizens of this province expect this place to work.

There is, in this province, an association — the member for Hamilton East referred to it — called the Ontario Municipal Water Association. That association speaks for 237 member water authorities all across the province on matters related to treatment and supply of drinking water in Ontario. They're not normally a very rangy group. They don't normally get very upset about matters and they're usually very cautious in their language. I'll repeat some of what the member for Hamilton East said, I think most appropriately.

The Ontario Municipal Water Association said, "We believe the government is opening the floodgates to the irreversible deterioration of water services in Ontario." That's a pretty damning statement. That's a serious statement. "It's a situation that is transforming Ontario's reliable and safe water service into one marked by chaos and fragmentation." Those are serious charges. "The government clearly has no plan to safeguard our drinking water and to ensure the high-quality, low-cost and reliable water system we enjoy today." Guess what? We never did get those assurances on the committee. When we tried to bring in amendments that would make some of that possible, we were stonewalled by the committee because the members on that committee had their marching orders.

"Instead, the Ontario government is paving the way for privatization. While private operators have profit, not customers, as their prime concern, municipalities will be further squeezed by reduced transfer payments so they may be forced to cross-subsidize other services with water revenues. This can create an incentive for municipalities to make up lost revenues through hidden taxes in

water rates." Certainly, that's what happened in other jurisdictions.

Speaking of other jurisdictions, I shouldn't move on until I mention this. This comes from Great Britain, which I referred to earlier. I quote from the *Sunday Times*: "Water companies, which have almost doubled charges in five years and made a combined profit of more than £1.5 billion" — so we're talking about \$3 billion — "in 1992-93, admit to operating nearly 200 sewage works illegally. They say it will be another three years before the problem — first highlighted by the *Sunday Times* 'Water Rats' campaign in 1989 — is under control."

"The National Rivers Authority, which monitors the waterways, said it had detected a substantial increase in reports of pollution incidents relating to sewage and the water industry. The number rose from 4,578 in 1988, the year before privatization, to 6,420 in 1992."

You can see that people were not simply blowing smoke at the committee or at the government when they expressed concern about what happened elsewhere. These are real concerns and at no point did the government, the parliamentary assistant, the minister, deny any of this. They couldn't. They couldn't use examples from jurisdictions where this was seen to be a good solution.

I must say that when we got into the clause-by-clause debate, we basically had two major amendments we wanted to put, and there were other amendments as well. One of the amendments was to build in a clause in the bill that simply said, "No municipality may privatize a sewer and water system." Or sub to that, if you will, would be, "If they do decide to do it, they must hold a referendum before it's allowed to take place." The second major one was to require a referendum on whether or not privatization could occur, as I said, and the other had to do with money.

The government says: "We're not going to simply allow the municipalities to sell these off at the price they determine. We're going to require that any provincial government grants since 1978 — was it, member for Riverdale? I think 1978."

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Yes, 1978.

1620

Mr Laughren: Going back to that date, any provincial grants given to the municipality for that sewer or water system would have to be repaid to the province. Isn't that nice? How would you like an interest-free grant for 20 years? That's not a bad deal. That would simply be built into the purchase price between the purchaser and the municipality.

That's a lot of nonsense. We tried to say, if you go that far, then for heaven's sake at least allow an interest charge to be made on that grant for whatever number of years since the grant had been granted. But no, the government wasn't hearing any of that either.

Finally — I want to leave time for my colleagues — near the end of the public hearings we had come before the committee a distinguished former mayor of the city of Toronto, Mr John Sewell. Mr Sewell had looked at the bill and he came before the committee and said that he thought the bill didn't have an honest title. It doesn't have an honest title; I said that when I started my remarks. The bill is entitled the Water and Sewage

Services Improvement Act, 1997. Well, that's not the purpose of this bill. So Mr Sewell said the title should be changed to read An Act to permit bad drinking water and poorly treated sewage in Ontario. The government voted against it. I can understand you'd be a little embarrassed to have a bill entitled that, but that at least would be an honest title. Or, Mr Sewell said, alternatively it could be called A Devious Act to privatize water and sewage facilities in Ontario. Once again, that's exactly what the purpose of this bill is.

Then Mr Sewell said he was concerned about testing, as there would be a lack of adequate testing given the record of this government when it comes to environmental protection. So Mr Sewell proposed a new section that would state as follows: "To test the quality of the product of those facilities transferred pursuant to this act, all Conservative MPPs who supported this legislation and its passage are required to (a) publicly consume two glasses of water produced by these facilities once every six months for the next 10 years, and (b) swim in the effluent of the sewage treatment plants once every July and August for the next 10 years."

On the issue of privatization, Mr Sewell said that he knew what was going on here and he thought the following amendment should be put into the bill as well: "No facility may be sold by a municipality, or a contract for its management made, except to a company which has made substantial contributions to the Conservative Party of Ontario or is friendly with individual Conservative MPPs and their families."

Mr Sewell, while he may have had his tongue in his cheek a bit on these proposed amendments, nevertheless knew what was going on and put it quite effectively.

In conclusion, because I want to allow time for my colleagues to speak, I would simply say that I'm disappointed in the way the government handled this bill. They went out to committee in London and Toronto, heard presentations by the public, and ignored every single substantial recommendation — completely ignored by the government. No serious question was given a serious answer by the parliamentary assistant who served on the committee, the member for Northumberland.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Oh, no, you're exaggerating.

Mr Laughren: I'm not exaggerating. It's reflected by the fact that no amendments were accepted. You tell me what the purpose of clause-by-clause debate is in committee if it's not to put amendments and have some of them accepted at least. The amendments were not radical amendments, they were not frivolous amendments; they were serious amendments that people had thought long and hard about, yet the government completely ignored them. I've seldom served on a committee where the government completely ignored every one. They had their marching orders and did absolutely nothing, changed nothing except the odd amendment that they themselves wanted to put.

It was a waste of money. Taxpayers should be phoning their Conservative MPP and saying: "Don't give us any more of your hogwash. Don't give us any more of your sanctimonious claptrap." You're not interested in saving money. If you were, you wouldn't have taken this

committee out on the road knowing ahead of time that you were not going to make any changes whatsoever to it. Don't try and sell yourselves as some kind of fiscal guardians in this province, because you're making a joke of that by holding committees and public hearings knowing ahead of time that you've got your marching orders. The members on the committee sat there like a row of sphinxes and said nothing during the debate on the bill, basically, accepted no amendments from the opposition, accepted no suggestions from the public, and didn't give any answers worthy of being called an answer during the entire debate.

I'm very unhappy with the way the government has handled this bill. I think if it doesn't raise cynicism among the electorate, if they're not already cynical enough, then they need only take a closer look at the way this bill was handled by the government.

They had to agree to public hearings, I guess, to facilitate the order of business in this assembly, but it would have been a much more honest approach if they had said: "No, we will not hold public hearings because we don't intend to do anything as a result of those hearings. We don't intend to change anything." Why not be honest and say, "We'll take our knocks here in the Legislature, but we're not going to pretend to have public hearings to hear from the public when we're not going to listen"? Why won't you do that? Don't you have the courage of your convictions? If you're going to simply say, "This bill is going to be dealt with as it now is before you, and holding public hearings would be meaningless," then have the courage to say that. Have the courage to say it and take your knocks in this assembly, but stop trying to kid the folks out there that you're going to hold public hearings and actually listen to people and accept some reasonable amendments, because that never, ever, ever was the intention of the government members.

Mr Duncan: I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak to this bill today and follow my colleague from Nickel Belt. In the time I have allotted to me I want to address four points.

The first is to go on more about the notion of the privatization of water and sewage treatment plants in Ontario. As my colleague from Nickel Belt pointed out, and my colleague from Hamilton East before him, the government missed an opportunity. They didn't heed the advice of all those who spoke to them to include in the bill a section that will prohibit the privatization of water and sewage treatment plants in Ontario. I suppose we really ought not to be surprised. This government has been a great advocate of privatization, with a full-steam-ahead attitude towards privatization, a government that sees very little role for the public sector in the provision of many goods and services.

I must say that I don't disagree with the notions around privatization of certain government functions or crown corporations. I do not, however, believe the government's approach on the privatization issue has been the best approach. The government has ignored very basic tenets of the notions around the public provision of certain goods and services, and water and sewage is one of those that ought to rest in public hands. Why? The members for Nickel Belt and Hamilton East painted a

very compelling picture of what happens when government privatizes the provision of drinking water, essential to life itself: the safety of supply, the adequacy of supply.

The government forgets that we in Ontario are blessed with an abundance of fresh water, that we are blessed with an environment that allows us to provide for our own needs. Historically, government after government after government in this province has worked to ensure that we can continue to provide a safe source of drinking water and have security of drinking water in all of our communities right across this great province.

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We had urged in committee, and before we vote on third reading we urge the government again, to bring forward an amendment that would prohibit the privatization, prohibit municipalities from privatizing sewer and water services in this province. That is the first fundamental problem we have with the bill.

The second has to do with the long-term maintenance of sewer and water infrastructure in Ontario. This bill was brought in in the context of the government's offloading, downloading, disentanglement exercise. The government acted on the recommendations of Crombie in some cases, and in other cases completely ignored those recommendations. Indeed what we are faced with today is most of what was brought forward in those mega-week announcements. Much of the downloading has been changed. Why? Because the government has recognized that it was creating an impossible financial burden on property taxpayers in this province. Indeed, to this day, even with their announced changes, even with the backtracking we've seen on certain items, taxpayers in this province are going to be faced with a further \$1.6-billion debt — tax liability, if you will.

What this bill, Bill 107, does not take into account is the cost associated with the maintenance and improvement on an ongoing basis of our sewer and water infrastructure. In some of our municipalities, the underground services, the pipes, in our downtown core are in excess of 90 to 100 years old and they're still functioning. Now we're putting the treatment plants in the same domain and at the same time we are adding more cost to that domain, the domain of Ontario's property taxpayers.

Over time, municipalities will be compelled to do one of two things: raise rates for water — and sewage rates in many municipalities are segregated out of property tax bills today. We in Windsor did that some years ago. They will be forced to raise rates or, alternatively, allow the infrastructure to further deteriorate. Why? Because if they privatize, there will be a profit motive built in, and in order to meet their obligations, municipalities will be forced to make these tough choices. This after all is a government that time and time again has offloaded tough decisions, has talked a tough game of its own, but is forcing our municipalities into the position of having to do things that quite frankly won't be very palatable. Those municipalities will not have the moral suasion, the financial wherewithal or the general ability of a large government or a large state such as the province of Ontario to protect that public interest.

We cannot consider this bill outside of the context of the government's overall environmental agenda, or should

I say lack of environmental agenda? We have seen literally millions of dollars cut from the Ministry of Environment's budget. It is the Ministry of Environment that has had probably among the greatest hits of any department of the provincial government, any ministry of the provincial government. Fully a third of the staff and a third of the budget of that ministry have been cut. We think of the environmental hot spots in this province. We think of issues ranging from water control, water quality, to air quality, land and soil use, conservation, and we have a government that has not only not acted, but has been irresponsible in its cuts and its approach to our natural heritage. It is a price that all of us will pay time and time again. In my own community, our local Ministry of Environment office has been closed. We have tremendous problems with air and water quality and pollution control, and now we don't even have the mechanisms whereby we can enforce our own environmental standards.

So it is with sorrow that we look at Bill 107 in that greater context, a context that will sell off the preservation of the Niagara Escarpment, a context that says measuring pollution in our environment is no longer important; it's not as important as ensuring that development, no matter what that development is, can go forward, forgetting that development can be positive in terms of the environment provided it's properly regulated and monitored by the government. This government has abandoned its responsibility in that area.

Finally, I'd like to take the last few moments I have to address the notion that these systems will be turned over to municipalities in compliance with their existing certificate standards. That may well be the case, but we say to the government members that it doesn't take long to fall out of compliance. We have concerns, quite frankly, that municipalities will not be able to have the properly trained staff to ensure those certificates are being honoured. Indeed, the government of Ontario, the Harris government, has left itself in the unenviable position of not being able in the future to enforce these very same standards.

We are left with a bill that will permit municipalities to privatize water and sewage. We are seeing a government yet again dumping its responsibility without concern for property taxpayers in this province. We see across the aisle in this House a government that has a shameful record on the environment, a government that has cut its budget, cut its staff, and has never had any commitment to ensuring that our environment and the heritage that we have will be protected into the future.

Finally, this bill reflects a government that is prepared to download to municipalities a responsibility that they have neither the technical nor the financial wherewithal to execute in a proper fashion. We urge the government to withdraw this bill before third reading or amend it so that we can address these very fundamental questions.

Ms Churley: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on third reading of this bill. I've spoken in the House on second reading and I sat for some of the committee hearings. I have to agree with my colleagues who spoke earlier today and said that the committees were a farce, a waste of time, because the government

refused to listen to any of the presenters and did not accept one amendment. There were some very good presentations from experts in the field who offered amendments, as did the Liberal and the NDP parties. The request from most people who are opposed to this was to withdraw the bill, it's so flawed, but short of that, failing that, that certain amendments be carried out. This government absolutely refused to accept any of them.

I want to take this opportunity to thank — I can't thank them all — some of the key people with particular expertise in sewer and water and environmental matters. These are the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Great Lakes United, the Public Committee for Safe Sewage Treatment in Metropolitan Toronto, Greenpeace, Save Ontario Water, the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy, the Ontario Municipal Water Association, and then there was Citizens for Local Democracy.

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I want to thank all of those people for taking on this issue. This was announced as part of the downloading bundle that was suddenly dumped on people right after the announcement of Bill 103, and it almost got lost in the shuffle, because when people hear "sewer and water" I believe most people just generally feel they get clean water out of their tap and it's been taken care of. To a lot of people it's a fairly boring subject to talk about sewer and water. I want to thank those people.

Citizens for Local Democracy: John Sewell came down and spoke to the committee, a bit tongue in cheek. I think he's learned the hard way that this government doesn't listen, but certainly made it very clear, representing citizens, thousands of people in Metro Toronto, how they felt about this downloading of the responsibilities of water and sewer to the municipalities.

The other groups that came — and as I said, I haven't mentioned them all — gave very good, very thorough, well-researched presentations. They were not, as usual, listened to — not once.

My colleagues today talked about some aspects of this bill which are truly frightening. When I listen to some of the members of the opposition talk about this bill, it is very clear that they don't know the implications of it. They talk about it almost as though it's some kind of systems maintenance as opposed to the real agenda here, and that is the downloading of these services to municipalities, many of whom have already had transfer payments by the province cut by up to 40%.

On top of that, the municipal assistance plan, money that governments in the past, all decent governments in the past, would set aside and give to particularly the poorer municipalities to help them make sure that their sewer and water systems were updated and provided clean, safe water and systems to their constituents, this government already took that away.

Then on top of that, earlier on they set the stage by, as my colleagues pointed out today, bringing in the omnibus — ominous — Bill 26. Surprisingly, given this government's so-called commitment to referendum, that opportunity and ability for people in their own ridings, in their own towns, to have a say, to really look carefully, to ask a lot of questions of their municipal councillors

and this government about what this really means, has all been taken away. Those citizens once again have lost rights to a pretty fundamental aspect of our lives, and that is clean water.

If a municipality is determined to privatize — we don't know of any for sure yet. I don't think any municipality at the outset is going to actually want to sell its water. We all know what happened in England, although there were a couple of people, one in particular, a private company which when I asked — and almost everybody else agreed that the privatization of water services in Britain was a disaster. One of the companies that came forward, which I presume would like to get in on this, when I asked, said no, they didn't think there was a problem in England, that the press was just giving one side of this issue.

I was quite astounded by that, because I believe I've heard every member of the government who's talked to this issue say, "Yes, it was a disaster in England and we're going to make sure that doesn't happen here." But they will not make sure that doesn't happen here because some of those poorer municipalities, when the results of all of the cuts start to click in, are going to look at the assets that the private sector out there knows they can buy and make money off.

That is why it is such a farce to tell people repeatedly, over and over again, in public, "Don't worry, because we're the first government ever to include some kind of measures in a bill that will not prevent but will discourage municipalities from selling off their water supplies because they would have to pay back any grants." That would be interest-free, of course. We all know that there have been companies — we read it in the paper last year; it was in the media — there are huge multinational corporations which are dying to buy our water, because they know from experiences in Europe that there are millions and millions of dollars to be made.

Municipalities — they won't have to hold a referendum; they won't have to talk to their public about it — may be forced into selling off the assets, let's face it, that the private sector will buy because they know they can make money. This one is proven; we know that.

That's why it's so worrisome and that is why it is so hard to believe when we hear the Minister of Environment and the parliamentary assistant, the member for Northumberland, stand and piously say: "You guys are scaremongering over there. We don't want this to happen. We think it's a dreadful idea and we've written into the bill something that will prevent them from doing it." But there are no guarantees.

What they have done is create a situation within the province whereby some municipalities will be forced to consider doing so. It may not be this year, it may not be next year, but God forbid, it is going to happen one of these days. You may have seen in the news again recently more publicity about what's happening in Britain, another drought, and more evidence that the private sector companies that own these water plants are making huge profits. The rates have gone up horrendously. Poor children are going to school without water in parts of Britain because their water is automatically cut off if they can't pay their bill. With the rates gone up so much, poor

people often can't afford to pay. It's horrendous. We don't want that happening in Ontario, in Canada.

This government is setting the stage for it to happen. It's really dismal when we have a government which turns a blind eye to the realities of what may happen here, and that is the legacy these people are going to leave. They don't know it now, they don't see it, but unfortunately down the road they won't be here any more. Many of us won't be here any more when it starts to happen. I hope that all of these people aren't here any more because of the damage they do day after day. We stand up in this House, the public comes to speak to them, and they don't listen. They think they have all the answers, and it repeatedly happens on every one of these bills. They are fundamentally wrong about this one.

The government of the day, the Tory Harris government, likes to try as much as possible when under siege to blame the opposition parties when they were in government, to say, "You guys started it," or "It's your fault; you didn't do anything about it," or whatever. That's happening again in terms of Bill 107. The parliamentary assistant likes to say that our government, the NDP government, started it with OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency, and that opened the door to privatization. It did not. This government could have proceeded, would have proceeded towards privatization — no problem. They've done it in other areas without OCWA being in place.

I can tell you that although they had some concerns, in general most of the environmental groups, because they helped in determining the frame of reference and the terms of reference for OCWA, were supportive of the assigned roles and responsibilities. OCWA was clearly targeting the environment and public health risks associated with bad drinking water. They were targeted to deal with inefficient and obsolete sewage treatment plants.

They were targeted towards the continuing deterioration of Ontario's aging infrastructure. They dealt with the urban sprawl issues, the scattered rural development and all kinds of undesirable land use issues. Moreover — and I've pointed this out before — OCWA had a very strong policy in terms of promoting water conservation, which was strongly endorsed by groups like CELA and GLU and others that I've mentioned today.

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That's all gone. None of these terms of reference, none of those assigned roles and responsibilities I spoke about which were a part of OCWA are within this bill. Some of them were wiped out some time ago; the rest have been wiped out with Bill 107. None of that has been left.

For this government to stand up and say about the NDP government, "It's your fault really; you did it. You support this because you formed OCWA," I think our government was clear that we supported it. I'll let the Liberals speak for themselves, but I believe that in many cases public-private partnerships, if they're worked out with the community and with the workers, can be good things. It's happening more and more on many levels of government.

It has to be done very carefully. In a situation like sewer and water, Bill 107, if you're looking at privatization of the operations, and this government says that's

all they're interested in doing — and we know that some privatization of operations has happened out there already — that is not what we're talking about here. We're talking about what happened in Britain, and that is the wholesale sale of our water to profit-making companies whose sole goal in life is to make money. That's what happened in England. There are no two ways about it, it is a disaster.

If the government were truly committed to avoiding that, they could prove it by accepting this amendment. Clearly they want to leave that door open for their corporate friends, there are no two ways about it. Otherwise, why wouldn't they do it? Which of their corporate friends — behind closed doors, in private, in secret, the way they do everything — have they told, "Wait, boys, down the road. Just give us a little time and let us get Bill 107 through. Let things sort themselves out. Then come to us" or go to whatever municipality. That is what's happening here, there are no two ways about it. If any of the members from that government over there don't believe it, you just wait and see what's going to happen to water and sewer in your municipalities.

I want to speak specifically about something that the government and in fact most members in opposition are not talking about very much. On the whole, it's much more problematic than people tend to think — people talk about it in terms of motherhood — and that is the Municipal Water and Sewage Transfer Act. This is attached to the bill as schedule A, and it gives the minister broad discretion to make orders transferring OCWA's waterworks, sewage works, assets, rights and obligations to a municipality. However, subsection 2(5) prohibits the transfer of certain OCWA liabilities to a municipality. I know that CELA and GLU, Great Lakes United, express great concerns about this, because this liability limitation provides further evidence of how the Ontario government hopes to make transfer orders more palatable to municipalities.

Having said that, the sewage system reform is one I am personally very concerned about, and I'll tell you why. When we talk about part VIII, the sewage systems, what we're talking about here are septic tanks, small private sewage works and other systems. Those are systems that don't discharge directly into the water-courses. We don't know how many of those systems are across Ontario, nobody knows, but there may be a million or more of those systems. The problem is that without the proper soil conditions, proper separation distances or proper design, construction and maintenance, this can really severely affect groundwater and surface water and can result in very serious problems for people living next door to this.

I know that the Commission on Planning and Development Reform in Ontario found, "There is increasing evidence of contamination of both ground and surface water from septic systems." They found that about a third are below standards, and another third were classified as a public health nuisance.

It seems to me, given the kind of evidence we have, that septic tanks can seriously contaminate groundwater, water people drink and use. It is very important that the government of Ontario, the MOEE, continue to be

responsible for the inspection and giving out permits and setting the standards and the licensing and all of that. They should be responsible for regular inspection.

No such safeguard exists in subsection 3(4) of Bill 107; it simply imposes the regulatory responsibilities upon all local municipalities, whether they want to, are capable of, are willing to or are equipped to actually carry out these new duties. I know that CELA and GLU and other people who came to talk to the committee said that was totally unacceptable to them and they believe it is going to cause great harm down the road.

Again, this government would not accept any amendments whatsoever that were put before them time and time again, because they kept saying: "Don't worry, it will all be taken care of. Motherhood. Don't you trust the municipalities to take care of their own municipal septic systems? Don't you trust them?" They tried to indicate that for those of us in opposition who are opposed to this it's nothing to do with a concern about the water quality, to smear us by trying to infer that we don't trust the municipalities.

This is not about trust. This is about municipalities having the money, the expertise, the inspectors, the ability to carry out this job. Many of them don't have that. With the downloading and the cuts to MAP and the general cuts and more to come, many of the poorer municipalities are not going to have this option to take proper care with their sewage systems. It's very worrisome. People should be concerned about that. We're talking about environmental protection and, literally, human health; it is not just one of those airy-fairy, tree-hugger environmental issues that some of us get accused of from time to time. I know I myself from time to time have been accused of being one of those.

This is very serious. We're talking about the water we drink and the water we use on a daily basis. If we can't be guaranteed that water is safe, then we're really in trouble. We know this bill is going to create tremendous problems for municipalities to make sure the health of their communities is maintained.

Speaking of water safety and health-related issues, I asked a question to the Minister of Environment today. You may recall this. It was about the Pickering nuclear plant and the revelation that over the past 25 years Hydro has been dumping more than 1,000 tonnes of toxic copper and zinc into Lake Ontario. This has been going on for 25 years under various governments' noses, including mine. There was some indication that back in 1989, I believe, there was some concern expressed to the government of the day, but it appears from all the evidence we have that there was a conscious coverup going on, which I think is scandalous.

I think it's a breach of trust for Hydro to have done this, and I believe a breach of trust for the Minister of Environment, who is assigned to protect the environment and the health of the people of Ontario, to give such an answer as he did today. What the minister said, essentially, was this:

"We are concerned about this matter. As you know, Ontario Hydro is reviewing the emissions that are occurring at Pickering station with a view to replacing the condenser tubing" — "with a view," he said, "to replac-

ing the condenser tubing" — "which is copper at the present time, which is of course present in many of our homes when water goes through. We're concerned about the loading of Lake Ontario with regard to this, but I want to assure you and every member of the public that the levels of copper and zinc in the cooling water discharge are 100 times lower than the Ontario drinking water...standards."

1700

Later I said, "I think that's a lousy answer," and I stand by that. "We've got information in front of us that these are toxic, persistent chemicals going into our water," and it's predicted it could take up to 100 years for cleanup, and some say longer. These are the kinds of toxic chemicals that get into the food chain. They don't break down and go away; they are there to stay.

Then in my supplementary the minister said: "First of all, I want to make it clear to the people of Ontario that copper is not deemed as a toxic pollutant in water. In fact, in terms of the commercial fishery, for instance, they add copper and zinc to supplement their diet. It's needed by those particular habitat.

"As I mentioned before, Ontario Hydro is reviewing their emissions with regard to these plants, is looking at what is being discharged and is going to come forward within a month with regard to putting forward their findings with regard to that. I think it's only prudent for me to wait for that particular report and then take appropriate action at that time."

I don't know what happened to the minister today. I asked him who wrote the answer for him, because I knew he'd be prepared today but I was really surprised at his answer. I thought at least he'd stand up and say, "I have grave concerns about this." From the information I have, it appears that there may have been a coverup, certainly from everything we've seen to date. I have various quotes and memos supplied to me that certainly indicate that.

I know our government didn't know about it. The Liberals before me — I hope the member for St Catharines, the previous environment minister, is going to stand up later and speak. I don't know if he knew about it, but it appears to me that for a very long time, and according to reports in the paper, some of the workers, the employees, were talking to the managers at Hydro, trying to get them to deal with this, and for many, many years they didn't. To me that is scandalous. This is a public utility.

The minister should at the very least stand up today and say: "Yes, I take it seriously. Yes, our ministry found out about it a year ago and we should have dealt with it then." Because I also have information that it was about a year ago that the management at Hydro came forward and let the ministry know formally about this, and they did nothing. They didn't inform the public, the people around the area who are drinking the water, and took no action. Even now, today, the minister is saying, "Let's just wait for a report; let's just wait and see what happens."

But the most astounding thing the minister said today is that copper is good for you. He said, "Copper is good for you." He said that. This is the Minister of Environment.

Mr Galt: He said that?

Ms Churley: He said that and I have the transcript right here. We are talking about 1,000 tonnes here, we aren't talking about minuscule amounts, and he had the nerve to stand up and say: "It's not a serious problem. Copper is good for you."

Coming back to the bill we're talking about today, this is an indication of where the Minister of Environment is at in terms of protecting our water.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): And public health.

Ms Churley: And public health. If we had any doubts whatsoever before we came in here today about Bill 107, that perhaps the minister didn't quite understand what was really going on here, that he really does care about public health, there are none left. He completely blew it today. If there's anybody in this Legislature who believes otherwise, I don't know where your heads are at. You all heard the minister say this today. It is absolutely astounding. That minister is there to protect your health, your family's health, the people of Ontario's health.

We have a minister who is quite willingly downloading the responsibilities for public health in terms of water to municipalities, many of which cannot afford to pay for it. What are they going to do? They are going to be forced in many cases or some cases — we'll see, unfortunately — to sell off their water to the vultures out there who are waiting to make a ton of money. I'll tell you, if we end up in Ontario in a situation a few years down the road from now that is happening in England, you will pay for it, because it is an absolute disgrace and it shouldn't be happening in this day and age.

When you are in a country where water has been privatized — there are actually little pamphlets put out. I don't have a copy with me. I wish I could show it to you. I guess I wouldn't be allowed to anyway, so I'll just talk about it. The title of it is something like Save Our Children. What is it exactly? Something about providing water for our poor children. I couldn't believe it when I saw it in Britain. This is happening. Poor children are going to school without any water, for weeks at a time. They're having to do fund-raising to help children —

Mr Bradley: The legacy of Maggie Thatcher.

Ms Churley: Under Maggie Thatcher — which this government says it's not going to do.

I also looked at some Hansards, some of the comments which were made in the British Parliament at the time they were talking about privatizing. It is uncanny in some cases the answers from the then Minister of Environment under the Thatcher government and from the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Environment. They're uncanny in terms of how close those assurances were. "Don't worry; be happy. The government cares. We won't let this stuff happen." Well, it happened.

In order to prevent it from happening, the government has the responsibility to put in place within this bill a very clear prohibition against privatizing the water, and they won't do that. That is absolutely clear. They have been told time after time after time. I think out of all the amendments which were presented by our caucus, the Liberal caucus and the many groups that came forward, that was the most important one.

There are many other problems with the bill as well. It should be withdrawn. We know why the government is doing this. They say it's all motherhood. "We're just giving municipalities more responsibility to take care of their own affairs." Motherhood. It sounds great. The title of the bill sounds great. But that isn't the reality.

I've spelled out, as have other of my colleagues today and the many groups that came forward, the real problems with this bill and what's really happening here, and that is, opening the door to full-scale privatization down the road for big corporations to make a lot of money. That's wrong. It is fundamentally wrong. I wish at the very least the government had chosen to support that amendment. It would take such heat off you, it really would, if you would do that, because that is the main concern.

This is going to grow. Because of all the other issues out there, there hasn't been a whole lot of attention paid to it, but there's growing concern about it. Once it's done people in local municipalities will start to figure out that because of Bill 26, if their council feels they're forced to sell off the water because they have no money, they won't have any say in it. So it's a double whammy. I guess it's a triple whammy, because as I said earlier, they have had so much of their transfer payments in the MAP program and the farm runoff program, which I didn't mention earlier. This is a disaster.

Let's not pretend now that this bill isn't going to pass today as it is before us without any of those amendments. We know it's going to do that. One of the first things that struck me when I looked at the bill — and I did read the bill carefully and analysed it with other experts who certainly understand some aspects of it better than I — is that what this government is doing in the process of coming forward with this bill is fooling people. It's got a beautiful title, as do all the bills. I've said before, I give the government a lot of credit for their titles. Let's face it, if you're sitting at home watching TV some time or the public hearings and stuff and that beautiful title comes across, the Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act — well, yes. It isn't an improvement act.

Mr Galt: It is.

Ms Churley: The parliamentary assistant still sits there and continues to say that this is actually an improvement.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): It is.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: They're all saying, "That's right." The junior minister for privatization is sitting over there saying, "That's right." Read the bill. I'm sorry, folks, but this is not an improvement. It's going to be a disaster.

1710

Did you listen to the Ontario Municipal Water Association? I know you don't listen to environmental groups, no matter how much expertise they have, no matter how much experience. I know you've written them off, like you've written me off and the opposition in general. But I think you should have listened to the Ontario Municipal Water Association. They called for some more amendments. They're very unhappy with this bill for some of the same reasons.

But once again this government, every last one of them, believes they have all the answers. Nobody else has a clue. Everybody else is a fool. We don't read the bill, we don't understand the bill, we don't know what we're talking about, we're in it for some kind of self-interest. That's not the case. These are special interest groups, I suppose you could say, in that they care about the environment, they care about public health. They don't make a lot of money off what they do, so there's no personal gain in it, and they should be listened to.

The tragedy with this bill is that it is going to go through today. The opposition has tried, as did the groups that came forward, to point out the really basic flaws in this bill and asked to have it withdrawn and to start all over again. All of the aspects of OCWA, the environmental justifications, the environmental role, are all out the window. In fact, I looked really carefully through this bill to find some kind of environmental justification for it. There isn't any.

Don't you think, Speaker, with an independent mind, and I know at the moment with a neutral mind because you're in the chair, and I understand that from being there myself —

Ms Lankin: Did she say your mind was in neutral?

Ms Churley: No, I didn't say that. The member for Beaches-Woodbine suggested that maybe I said your mind was in neutral and I just want to be clear that's not what I said. I understand that in the chair we are all neutral when we listen to debates and that's very important.

But I would say to you, Speaker, wouldn't you think it makes sense when you're changing such fundamental aspects of how we deliver services like water and sewage in our communities that you listen to the experts, that you look at it with an open mind? You are elected to represent not only your constituents but all of the people of Ontario. It is the duty of each and every one of us to not just proceed with our own government agenda — because we know that this stuff is all lumped in together and that's what gets really scary about it. That's why we know why they don't listen.

I had some people come to me from the Metro police force to lobby me on changes to the police services bill. Which one is that? I forget now. Bill 105. They're feeling pretty discouraged and they know that this government doesn't really want to piss them off but they also understand —

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Angry, I should say. Let me change that. They know that you want to work with them.

Mr Bradley: What did she just say?

Ms Churley: I just said "pissed off," and I withdraw it if it's not parliamentary and say "angry." They know that the government would like to work with them. All of us in this House know how important the police role is in our communities and how important that balance between community and accessibility — it's all so very important and a very delicate balance. But what one of them said to me is that the problem here is this is part of that downloading package. It's got to be done because municipalities want it.

That is the problem with all of these downloading bills. It's all part of a package. Because of the cuts in transfers

and the downloading on top of that, certain promises had to be given to municipalities in terms of raising revenues and the ability to have more autonomy and control over all kinds of services in their communities. But it isn't necessarily for the good of the people in those communities and that's what has been avoided when we have those debates. The government members don't want to hear the truth about the realities that are going to come down the pipe with some of these changes — and I mean down the pipe literally in this case.

They don't want to hear it, and that was very clear in the committee hearings on Bill 107: "Don't tell us the facts because there's nothing we can do about it. We were sent into this committee like good little soldiers to do our job."

Ms Lankin: Lambs to the slaughter.

Ms Churley: Like lambs to the slaughter. The member for Beaches-Woodbine continues to help me out here. Yes, like lambs to the slaughter. I have seen members uncomfortable with some of this stuff as they start to learn more about it, but on the whole, they don't want to hear it because it's too painful. They've got to, at the end of the day, make all the justifications, their little lines that they've been given, out of context of what's been talked about by all the groups that came in to talk to the committee.

Sometimes it's bizarre. We're sitting there and we have these amazing presentations, for instance, in the resources development committee from some of the groups I mentioned, with amazing expertise, like the Ontario Municipal Water Association or the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Save Ontario Water. Amazing presentations with all kinds of facts and information. It's great, and then the questions and the comments that come from the government members are totally bizarre. It often has nothing to do with the information that's been presented to us. It's so out of context because that's what they've been told to say, and that is one of the very great problems we have. I think most of the government members aren't even aware of the implications of this bill.

I know people get really busy and you can't pay attention to everything that happens. They have to trust that the minister, the people on the committee and the parliamentary assistant will tell them what's going on. They have to trust that they're getting the correct information and then they have to go along with that. That's what happens. I believe that if government members paid more attention, as did some of the members in the House when we got more and more information on the downloading and Bill 104 — we had a few members from the Tory back bench, like the member for Grey-Owen Sound, and I forget the other two, who said some pretty interesting things about their own government. They're giving a very clear message. We know that there are some terrible things going on. One or two of the members said it was a dictatorship. That isn't John Sewell talking or our caucus talking. That's some of their own members.

Mr Gerretsen: No kidding?

Ms Churley: No kidding. I suppose in one way we could find it funny, but I also think it should be a wake-up call to the government when some of their own backbenchers are saying that about them.

This bill today really is a mistake. I know it's going to pass today, we all know that, and we will all do our best over the next few years, while this government continues to be in power, to make sure that privatization doesn't happen. Perhaps we'll have some time to reverse it when these people are thrown out in the next election. I can absolutely assure you that this is one area, whoever is elected, that is going to have to be reversed. Perhaps there will be an opportunity in a few years' time, before full-scale privatization starts to happen, to reverse this decision.

I have to say honestly, to folks who may be out there listening today who have concerns about that, that this bill is going to pass today and that there is a likelihood, the opening for privatization of their water to happen, and therefore very serious health concerns, environmental concerns, rate increases, but that there is some hope that privatization might be held off. If our party gets into government, I want to assure everybody that we will make sure that doesn't happen and that it will be reversed.

I thank you for the opportunity so speak about this extremely important bill today, Speaker.

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Mr Bradley: The critic for the third party has outlined many of the problems that have existed with this bill, as have the critic for the Liberal Party, Dominic Agostino from Hamilton East, and Dwight Duncan, the member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Ms Churley has again established some of the real concerns that the opposition has about Bill 107. It's one of those bills that's not going to attract a great deal of attention in the provincial news media or the national news media, because it is presented as rather innocuous; it is presented as something that will not have great ramifications for the province. When you consider it, it's part of a package of this government of de-investing in the public sector by turning certain portions of government operations over to the private sector. As I think everybody has said, all governments look at their operations and endeavour to determine which are best carried out by the government itself through ministries, by crown corporations, or by a combination of private sector/public sector alliances or the private sector itself. So there are about four different options one can look at.

My concern is that this government does not look at it on a practical basis but rather on an ideological basis. In other words, there are many members of the government caucus who believe that the public sector and everything associated with it is evil and that the private sector should be allowed to do virtually everything in the province. They are the ideologues, they are the disciples of Guy Giorno and Tom Long and other advisers to the Premier who are not elected but have far more power than even members of the cabinet and certainly members of the government caucus who are not in the cabinet.

I become concerned when I see this kind of legislation being brought forward. It's part of a package in the environment of downgrading the importance of the Ministry of Environment, the influence of the Ministry of Environment and the resources of the Ministry of Environment.

We had achieved in this province a Ministry of the Environment which was the envy of many jurisdictions in this country and around the world. During the late 1980s, when there were funds available to do so, we were able to build a very strong team in the Ministry of the Environment to be able to carry out those responsibilities necessary to protect the environment in this province.

There were members in the Conservative benches in those days — not all of them; some of them — who thought the government was too intrusive, that it had adopted a confrontational stance with polluters as opposed to a cooperative stance, that it was interested in prosecution rather than persuasion. I simply say to those who do not like that course of action that it is the fairest course of action to everybody in the province. Indeed, the good corporate citizens were never afraid of the Ministry of the Environment, and seldom saw the Ministry of the Environment as a nuisance but rather as a potential ally. They were the people who were prepared to invest the money and the resources in their own operations to ensure they were environmentally benign at the very least and, to repeat a word used often, were proactive — I don't know if that word actually exists — in trying to find solutions to problems.

I think we have to remember that there were a number of corporate citizens in the late 1980s and perhaps the early 1990s who were trying to find those solutions to problems, who were cooperative, and who said, "As long as the laws are fair, as long as we've had consultation previous to the laws being enacted" — and they meant meaningful consultation — "and as long as you'll let us know enough ahead of time what you plan to do, we think we can make progress in meeting environmental obligations."

This government has taken a new approach. Part of the reason is that the public interest is not as acute as it was in the 1980s and perhaps the very early 1990s in environmental issues. That is certainly reflected in the coverage that the news media give to environmental issues. When somebody spilled ink on the floor in the late 1980s, it seemed, there were five cameras running to whoever the Minister of the Environment was of the day, demanding how the ink could possibly be spilled, who was going to clean it up, and what the long-term consequences for the environment were. Today there are some very significant problems out there that are simply not being addressed and not being paid attention to by the news media, who have gone on to some other issues.

The privatization of water and sewer in this province is not a positive step. There are certain areas where the private sector does the job. One of the members, I think from the Oshawa area, one of the Durham members, has said to those of us in the opposition, sometimes in derision, "Well, should the government build cars?" No, they shouldn't. That's for the major car companies to do, and they do as good a job as they can. They produce some excellent vehicles in our province.

I notice, and some of my colleagues may be aware of this, that in the budget it talked about an auto worker making \$84,000 a year. I've talked to many auto workers since that time, because St Catharines has a lot of auto workers, and I can't find any of them who made \$84,000.

I talked to my next-door neighbour. He said he made about \$45,000 a year, and if he worked seven days a week and I guess 12 hours a day, he might get up to over \$60,000, but he didn't know anybody who had made \$84,000 a year. And yet in the budget it gave the impression that an auto worker was a person who made \$84,000 a year and therefore would benefit rather immensely from the ill-conceived tax cut this government is implementing at the expense of many government services. So I know my friends in St Catharines who work in the auto industry will certainly be unhappy with the members of the government who say or imply that they make \$84,000 a year. If none of the government members are prepared to mention that, I will be happy to remind my friends who work in the auto plants in St Catharines, auto parts manufacturing, that indeed that was in the budget. In fact, I may even send them this Hansard so they will be aware of that.

There is a concern throughout the government about this obsession with privatization. The Minister without Portfolio for privatization is in the House this afternoon. The very fact that they have a minister with specific responsibility for privatization in itself should be rather frightening, rather than simply having the government as a whole look at all of the options it has available.

I met with some representatives of the Ministry of Transportation employees in St Catharines in my constituency office this week to discuss their concerns. People will recall that when the Peterson government announced that the Ministry of Transportation was moving to St Catharines, some 1,400 employees were supposed to go with that move. Subsequently, under the NDP, there were some cuts in the civil service and the number of people turned out to be 1,000. Now we have 600-odd people working in that office, and many of those people are concerned that privatization is going to wipe out their jobs.

These are people who upon review by the NDP and then review by the Conservatives were still told they were moving to St Catharines, so they made a lot of commitments, and I'll tell you, some of those were difficult. I think in some families it may have even resulted in a marital breakup because of decisions made for one to move to one area and one didn't want to move. That potential was certainly there. There were people who were commuting; there were people who sold houses and bought new houses. Now these people are concerned that the ministry is going to privatize virtually everything within the Ministry of Transportation. I don't think that's positive, because what we're doing is putting the fox in charge of the henhouse.

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That's what I'm afraid of with this bill, that what we're going to see is an easing of the regulatory framework in which these small plants and small municipalities work. There's nothing I can think of that is of more concern environmentally on a firsthand, front-line basis, than the quality of water one is drinking and the quality of water that is there for recreational purposes. It seems to me that if the government proceeds in this direction, there is a danger that we will see a deterioration of the quality of that water.

This government likes to portray itself as tough on crime. There's a lot of talk about that. When you look at the funding, it's really not there. An example in my area would be when Preston Manning came to St Catharines and exploited a certain circumstance, a very tragic crime that happened in our area. There were people there who discussed problems; we had one person there with a problem. There's a Ministry of the Attorney General office set up in St Catharines supposedly to notify victims about court cases and the whereabouts of convicted criminals and so on. There was a big announcement, but there wasn't the money to go with it. One of the individuals who attended the Manning extravaganza in St Catharines had a problem with the provincial government, because they had not funded a specific program. I'm not going to call a press conference and have that person there; that's not the way I operate. I just want to say that there's a lot of talk about the law and order on that side, but when you talk about it, that means an investment in funds.

"How does that relate to this bill?" the Speaker is wondering. I can tell him that. That relates to this bill because the Ministry of Environment investigations and enforcement branch, as a result of cutbacks, has fewer staff and fewer resources. They would certainly be needed to look at problems that might exist within the provision of water and the treatment of water services in this province.

The money is available there. The government, instead of giving its tax cut, could provide the resources to the Ministry of Environment. They wouldn't have to dump this responsibility on to municipalities and eventually, I believe, into the private sector; that is, the responsibility for the provision of water and sewer services in Ontario.

The government gets block transfers from the federal government. A lot of people don't know this or a lot of people like to forget it. Nowadays, the government gets block transfers from the federal government. That was at the insistence of the provinces. They can do whatever they want with those funds. They can put it into health care and they wouldn't have to close hospitals. They could put it into education and they wouldn't have the problems they have with education these days. They could put it in the environment and solve that.

This government instead has chosen to take those federal transfer payments and give them away in the tax cut, the tax cut which benefits the wealthiest people in our society, because if you're making \$300,000 a year, you're going to get more dollars in an income tax cut provincially than if you're making \$40,000 a year or \$30,000 a year.

I believe the government would be better to invest in the environment. Instead of cutting the ministry budget by one third, instead of cutting the staff by one third, instead of removing the regulations which have protected our environment over the years, the government should be moving in the opposite direction. This bill does not do so. Despite the representations made to the committee, there were very few amendments made to this legislation of any significance to reflect those representations made on that occasion.

I express my concern about this bill. Our hospitals, for instance, in various communities will need good, clean water and will have to have the water they use serviced

appropriately, in other words treated appropriately, for sewer purposes. The people at the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines, which this government wishes to close, will be very concerned about that, or the Port Colborne hospital or the Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie or the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital at Grimsby or the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital. All those people are going to be extremely concerned, concerned that they're on the chopping block from this government, but in other communities they're going to be concerned that the quality of water being provided to all citizens, including the hospitals, could be in jeopardy if the government proceeds with this bill and if we get into privatization and less inspection.

I'm saying the government should be investing in these areas. I think the public wants that. Today, I'm listening to people say, "We thought at one time that tax cuts were a good thing. We thought it sounded attractive: Let's get some money back." Now they're saying to me, "I would prefer to have the Attorney General have this money so he can carry out his responsibilities." I support the Attorney General in that regard because —

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): You can't keep a straight face.

Mr Bradley: He says I'm smiling. I smile at the Attorney General because he is looking for more funds. He has had his budget depleted, and he would like to have more money.

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, \$61 million.

Mr Bradley: The member for Kingston and The Islands tells me his budget is cut \$61 million. I think in their heart of hearts a number of members on the government side are now saying the tax cut was a mistake. Gary Carr was right, Morley Kells was right, Chris Stockwell was right — who else? — Ted Arnott was right, and the others who weren't perhaps so publicly vocal but behind closed doors of the caucus probably said that it doesn't make sense. When you're running a deficit it does not make sense to be giving tax cuts, particularly those which benefit the richest people the most and particularly those which mean you're going to have to make drastic cuts in government services.

I know that the government members aren't saying anything about other levels of government because they are indeed dumping on the local level of government. I know the Premier said to them, certainly back in 1994, "Don't start whining about somebody else. It's our own problems that we deal with." Here's what the Premier said in May 1994, right here in this House: "It is actually a disgrace when the Premier of the province spends his time whining, pointing fingers, blaming others. That is not the legacy, that is not the history of this province that I grew up in, and that will not be the legacy and history of this province when we bring common sense back to it."

I have many more quotes in here, but I won't necessarily repeat them to members of the House. I know that members of the House on the other side will be following the advice of the Premier, advice he gave freely and eloquently in this House not to be whining about other levels of government.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Bradley: Oh, I have annoyed the member for St Catharines-Brock.

Mr Froese: Mr Speaker, while I always appreciate the comments from the member for St Catharines, I think we're debating Bill 107, the Water and Sewage Service Improvement Act, 1997, and I haven't heard anything in the last number of minutes about —

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I appreciate the member's concern. I was listening very carefully to the member, and his remarks are within the general context of the bill. I'd like to have him continue.

Mr Bradley: May I take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, when you say that, to commend you. I have found you, when I have been speaking in this House, to be a person who understands that. There are a lot of people in the House over the years who have not understood that we must look at everything in the general context, and you have been one individual, when sitting in that chair, who has consistently recognized that. I hope the people watching back in Stratford and Moncton and other places close to that will recognize that you are a person who understands that when we're speaking in this House we must look at things in a general context.

I know what the Premier said and I know what Gary Carr said in opposition. He was talking about another Premier, but he said: "Here we have a Premier who is now setting up a strategy for the next election. What did you do to the municipalities, universities, school boards and hospitals? It was not only bad, Premier, it was worse over the last few years. The public don't want partisanship or gamesmanship. They want results." You know, Gary Carr was right. Mike Harris was right. I know we're not going to hear from the government members on the other side when they're taking the block transfers from the federal government, that they can use any way they want, and giving them away in a tax break instead of spending them on health care, spending them on education, spending them on the Ministry of Environment.

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If I wanted to stray from this bill, I would talk about the fact that the Conservative Party is ending rent controls in this province. The Speaker would then be justified in calling me to order, saying, "You cannot include in your speech on this bill the fact that the Conservative government is removing rent controls," which are most important to the most vulnerable people in our society, including senior citizens.

I will go on to one other aspect of this bill, and that is that we even have concerns from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario about this bill. Their concern is the high cost of servicing plant debts. AMO's main concern is: "Given the huge fiscal pressures dumped on municipalities during the so-called mega-week, municipalities may not now have the resources to assume the costs of operating these plants. Municipalities may have to reduce services and allow plants to deteriorate, or dramatically raise the cost of water and sewer services." I think AMO is right in that regard, and I know that the municipal affairs critic for the Ontario Liberal caucus, the member for Kingston and The Islands, an individual who

had a distinguished association with AMO and was at one time the mayor of the city of Kingston, will want to elaborate on that.

I will, in my final conclusion, ask that the government withdraw this bill this afternoon, that it take it back, that it rework the bill, that it reflect some of the representations which were made to the committee, representations referred to by my friend the member for Nickel Belt, who said that while excellent representations were made, there was very little reflecting those arguments in the final bill we see before us.

Withdraw the bill. Start again. Slow down, do it right, and you will be doing a favour to the people of this province.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to join this debate today and to start where the previous member, the always eloquent member for St Catharines, left off, and that is the position that AMO has taken in this regard.

It's very interesting that here we have an organization that views itself as a full partner with the province in governing the province, the municipalities within the municipal sphere and the province within the provincial sphere. At least that's what this government has said: They want to be full partners and they want to negotiate with the municipalities and do the right thing.

The position that the province has taken with respect to this bill is that it is forcing municipalities to take over the ownership of those plants, about 25% of them in the province, currently owned by the province. They're forcing municipalities to take over the operation of these plants and the ownership of these plants and all the debt that may be associated with it whether the municipalities want to or not.

That, to me, is one of the great inconsistencies in this bill. If it's such a good deal for municipalities, why wouldn't they take it over freely? Why wouldn't the province just say to those that don't want to: "Okay. You don't want to take it over. It's a good deal for you. You don't have to." But that's not the approach this government has taken. This government is saying: "We want to get rid of these plants. Municipalities, you've got to own and operate them and look after the outstanding debt that's still against these plants whether you like it or not." You've got to remember that many of these plants were built in the 1950s and 1960s and are going to require major outlays of capital moneys to upgrade them and update them.

I've had an opportunity to speak on this issue on a couple of occasions, both at second reading and this time, and I keep coming back to this point, for the simple reason that we've got to remember that a lot of these plants were provincially owned and operated, and as a matter of fact the province constructed a lot of these plants, because smaller municipalities simply were not in a position financially to do so back in the 1950s and 1960s. In the case of larger municipalities, the plants have always been owned and operated and built by those municipalities. They had the taxing capacity to build these plants. The smaller municipalities couldn't do it, so the province, in more enlightened days of former Conservative governments, before the Reform group we have there right now, said: "Look, we've got to be fair to all

Ontarians, and the only way to be fair to them is that in those areas where the financial capacity isn't there, we are going to build these plants, we are going to run them, and then we're going to charge the users and the municipalities the cost it will take to maintain them."

Under the present circumstances, with the attitude this government is taking, a plant like this could never, ever be built again in smaller municipalities that don't have the taxing capacity to build them. That is the great inconsistency, that these plants are going to be forced to be taken over by municipalities whether they like it or not.

Another inconsistency in one section of the act is very interesting. This is the government, you may recall, that during the last election campaign and even today, before the Legislative Assembly committee, continually talks about having binding referendums in Ontario, for all sorts of different issues. I don't want to get involved in a whole discussion of whether referendums are good, bad or indifferent, but it's certainly the case that this government wants to see more referendums being conducted at the province-wide level.

Well, isn't it interesting that in this particular bill they have eliminated the need for municipalities to hold referendums before they can sell off these water and other utility plants? To me, that is a totally inconsistent position. How on one hand can you say referendums are basically a good thing, that they allow the people of Ontario the right to show how they feel about a particular issue, and then in an act to take that away where it has always been a requirement before one of these plants could be sold off by a municipality? Why would you take that away? Why would you take away that referendum right if you really and truly believe in the notion of a referendum?

It is a little bit like the megacity referendums that were held here in the city of Metropolitan Toronto back in the first week of March this year, when the province said, "Yes, we're in favour of referendums, but we don't like what was decided in these municipal referendums," where 75% of the people voted against the megacity, "so we're not going to adhere to them or we're not even going to listen to what they had to say."

I'm one of these people who believes an awful lot can be said about how a particular government feels about a particular situation, whether they're in favour of one kind of endeavour or another, by the amount of money it makes available to allow that particular service to be delivered to the taxpayers and to the citizens of Ontario. It's very interesting that in a matter of two years, the budget for the Ministry of Environment and Energy has been reduced by a total of 38.5%.

These are the government's own figures, out of its own budget. This isn't some kind of Liberal propaganda or propaganda put together by other people. This is from the government's own documentation. The budget in the Ministry of Environment and Energy has been reduced from \$244 million a year, which is where it was two years ago, to \$150 million a year today, for a reduction of 38.5%.

What that means to the average Ontarian is that you will not have the same inspection services, you will not have the same enforcement services. Whether we're

talking about air pollution, water pollution — there's been an awful lot of talk about making sure the water we drink is safe — in all those areas it could be said that this government truly believes there should be a lessening of not only rules and regulations but also of enforcement and of the total environmental concerns that most people in Ontario still have.

Perhaps the environment nowadays doesn't have the same kind of appeal to people, with all the other problems we have, such as unemployment, such as the huge deficits the provinces and the federal government choose to run etc, but it's still certainly a concern. It's a concern to me, when I'm in Toronto here three or four days a week, as we all are, and I look out my apartment window and I see a film of — well, I don't know what it is — across the city. I say to myself, "With all the modern technology we have available, do we really have to live under those kinds of circumstances?" with that kind of pollution that most of us, unfortunately, have already started to accept.

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What kind of an environment are we going to leave behind for our children and our children's children? Surely it is time we did something about it. Surely what we should not be doing is cutting by 38.5% the amount of money we're spending in Ontario to make sure that the environment we all live in, that we all want to enjoy, that we all want to make sure is safe for ourselves and our children isn't affected in a harmful way. Why are we cutting these funds? Why are we making these transfers to the municipal sector? For one reason and one reason only: so government can get out of this kind of endeavour.

As was raised earlier today, there may be certain municipalities where indeed it makes sense for septic systems, for example, to be approved and inspected by local inspectors. I'm not for a moment suggesting that for those municipalities which have that capacity and have the expertise on their staff that's a function that can't be handed over to them so that when you've got the building inspector or the electrical inspector going into a new house construction situation, perhaps these other things can be looked at as well. Certainly there are areas in which we can save money and we can save our energies, but there are also many situations that you and I know about, Mr Speaker, where that simply will not happen if we do not have a provincial inspection or enforcement body like we currently have. That is going to largely disappear.

It's also very interesting to know that the Ontario Municipal Water Association, a group which represents 220 drinking-water plants which are already owned by municipalities, is very concerned that municipalities will either want to sell off their plants or be forced to sell them to cover the additional responsibilities that have come to the local taxpayer as a result of the downloading. It's interesting that they took a survey back in October 1996 which showed that 75% of the people of Ontario wanted to make sure that the water systems we have in this province were retained in public ownership.

As the member for St Catharines has already stated, the government has a choice. Yes, there has been some

down-cutting of transfer payments from the federal government. But what has really happened to this money? It's interesting that the amount of money that has actually been lessened in federal transfers is about \$1.8 billion over the last five years. What has happened to that?

We all know the government has a choice to utilize that federal money that's being transferred by way of block grants and put it towards health care, put it towards education, put it towards social services, put it towards the environment, and this government has decided it wants to give people a tax cut, one of the most ridiculous notions ever advanced, in my opinion. How can you have a tax cut when you still have an annual deficit; when the interest on the public debt, according to the government's own figures, is going up from \$7.1 billion — this is just the public debt interest that we paid in 1993-94 — to \$9.1 billion currently?

I know our finances are starting to look better, but we are still running an annual deficit situation. It's projected that it's going to be \$6.5 billion. It's a vast improvement over the \$10-billion or \$11-billion deficit they used to run two or three years ago, but there's still a deficit there. To start handing money back to people at this stage just doesn't make any sense at all, since you're still building up the public debt. Again, the budget document clearly indicates that the public debt in this province is going from \$100 billion to \$120 billion in a matter of five years.

I see now that the same kind of notion is being advanced by Mr Charest. He thinks the people of Ontario and the people of Canada will bite twice, that again we can have it both ways: We can have our tax cut and at the same time put more money in for health care and education and also balance the budget a lot sooner than is anticipated. It just doesn't make any sense. It's certainly my hope that the people of Ontario and the people of Canada will not go for that same nonsense twice in a row.

I suggest to the government, as I wind up this debate on Bill 107, that this is the wrong way to go. What the people of Ontario are interested in is public ownership of our water plant system. They do not want especially those plants that are in smaller municipalities privatized. Remember, these plants were built originally to ensure that the same water quality was available in the smaller municipalities that couldn't afford to build their own plants. That's why the province got involved. Those are the communities that will suffer more and more as a result of the consequences of Bill 107.

The Acting Speaker: There are no other honourable members who wish to participate in the debate.

Mr Sterling has moved third reading of Bill 107. Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; there will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1758 to 1803.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Mr Sterling has moved third reading of Bill 107. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Beaubien, Marcel	Jordan, W. Leo	Smith, Bruce
Boushy, Dave	Kells, Morley	Snobelen, John
Brown, Jim	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Chudleigh, Ted	Leach, Al	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Leadston, Gary L.	Stewart, R. Gary
Danford, Harry	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tasca, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	McLean, Allan K.	Tilson, David
Doyle, Ed	Munro, Julia	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Murdoch, Bill	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Mushinski, Marilyn	Vankoughnet, Bill
Fox, Gary	Newman, Dan	Villeneuve, Noble
Froese, Tom	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wetlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Witmer, Elizabeth
Grimmett, Bill	Ross, Lillian	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Runciman, Robert W.	Young, Terence H.
Harnick, Charles	Sampson, Rob	
Johnson, Bert	Saunderson, William	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Hoy, Pat	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Miclash, Frank
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Morin, Gilles E.
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Pouliot, Gilles
Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances	Pupatello, Sandra
Duncan, Dwight	Laughren, Floyd	Ramsay, David
Gerretsen, John	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Gravelle, Michael	Martin, Tony	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 52; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1805.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Kenora	Michals, Frank (L)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
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Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)		Wood, Bob (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	London South / -Sud	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
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Downsview	Castrilli, Annamaria (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Marland, Margaret (PC)
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Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Niagara Falls	Hudak, Tim (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Niagara South / -Sud	Laughren, Floyd (ND)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Nickel Belt	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		Galt, Doug (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Norfolk	Carr, Gary (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Northumberland	Colle, Mike (L)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Oakville South / -Sud	Vacant
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Oakwood	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)	Oriole	Patten, Richard (L)
Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Oshawa	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)
Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)
Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)	Ottawa East / -Est	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Ottawa-Rideau	Chiarelli, Robert (L)
Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)	Ottawa South / -Sud	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		
Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)	Ottawa West / -Ouest	
Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)	Oxford	
Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)		

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Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
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St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Isabel (PC)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Samia	Boushy, Dave (PC)	Windsor-Riverside	Vacant
Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York Mills	Tumbull, David (PC)
		York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 27 May 1997

Mardi 27 mai 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 27 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 27 mai 1997

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I want to address my statement directly to the Minister of Labour concerning the appalling state of the Workers' Compensation Board, especially in dealing with appeals when it comes to injured workers.

The system is now in total disarray. I have a letter from the appeals tribunal in answer to one of my constituents, which states that very recently they are experiencing a significant increase in the volume of appeals, resulting in a delay in the process of appeals itself. Minister, this is a direct result of the cuts you have imposed, have already made, to the workers' compensation staff.

The letter says, "Based on current projections, we will be able to process your appeal in February-March 1998." This is almost one year. To tell the injured workers they have to wait for so long is totally unjust. How is an injured worker to provide for his family and his family needs, especially when he's the sole wage-earner faced with such a long waiting period? This is not what injured workers are expecting from their provincial government.

I call upon you, Minister, to respond properly to the appeal of the injured workers and give them the attention —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Statements.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES FOR SEXUAL MINORITIES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Today the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario released a report called *Systems Failure*. It's a report on the experiences of sexual minorities in Ontario's health care and social services system.

I have to tell you it's damning in its findings. It's the result of a four-year study called *Project Affirmation*. It was done through surveys, over 1,200 people involved from the gay and lesbian and bisexual community, focus groups. Through it all, the results show systemic failure. There are stories ranging from unbelievable ignorance, insensitivity and hostility down to institutional stonewalling and incompetence.

The system has failed this population by failing to provide appropriate service. The result is that lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgenders must make the decision

whether to disclose the circumstances of their lives. If they do, they risk meeting with prejudice; if they do not, the health care and social service assistance they obtain may not correspond to their needs. Many simply avoid even needed health care and social services. Their access to health care and social services is compromised.

This report is important. It speaks to the failure of our systems for this community. I can't help but note that this is at a time when here in Toronto the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended the closing of Wellesley Hospital, the only hospital that has gone through a process of building a relationship with the community. I hope the minister will take these recommendations into mind when considering that.

SUNSHINE GAMES

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): I rise today in the Legislature to recognize the fifth annual Sunshine Games at Variety Village, which is located in my riding. I attended the games on May 4, as I have in previous years, to support this wonderful organization and the excellent work they do.

Variety Village is a facility catering to children and adults with special needs. It boasts world-class athletic facilities for physically challenged athletes. The Sunshine Games are competitions for teams comprised of athletes who use the facilities and business sponsors for each team.

This year's event saw 42 teams with over 400 volunteers. Each team paid a \$5,000 sponsorship fee and also raised money through their employees' efforts. The event raised \$329,000 for the Variety Village complex in Scarborough. All Scarborough branches of the Royal Bank of Canada supported the games and raised the most money. Their enthusiasm and vigour were contagious. Congratulations, Royal Bank employees.

Honorary chair was George Cohon, CEO of McDonald's. I commend his tireless efforts on behalf of Variety Village. Every year George and Susan Cohon are there for the participants. The disabled athletes appreciated the presence of Elvis Stojko, Barbara Turnbull and media people from BBS Television, Global and CITY-TV.

Variety Village is an amazing facility that gives children and adults with disabilities a chance to participate in athletics and to meet other young people who face similar challenges. I am honoured to be involved. I congratulate all the sponsors, athletes and volunteers.

ANTI-RACISM FUNDING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): This government has shown no commitment to deal with

racism or equity issues that are around us every day. One of the first acts of this government was to eliminate employment equity. It since has cut the budget of the Ministry of Citizenship and all anti-racism initiatives, not to mention the massive cuts at the Human Rights Commission.

In Ontario there still exist individuals who feel that racism is the order of the day. Unfortunately, we have seen this recently in the vandalism that took place at the Munchy King restaurant in Scarborough. The culprits were motivated by racism. Tony McPherson opened a small West Indian restaurant only four months ago. He arrived to open it one morning to find the back door pried open, dishes smashed, furniture broken, tablecloths ripped and racist hate messages spray-painted across the walls. This hate crime was a deliberate and malicious attack on a business owned by a person of colour.

Lawyer Bill McMurtry and artist Salome Bey responded by establishing a trust fund called PART: People Against Racism Trust. This action goes far beyond these two individuals, as hundreds have responded and called in their support, positive comments and funds. This should not exist in 1997, but unfortunately it does.

This incident shows that more must be done. Citizens and the media have said, "We do not tolerate these actions." This government's lack of action and leadership says otherwise. To combat racism, the government must rethink its function and do more.

1340

HEARST CELEBRATIONS

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): Today I want to congratulate the town of Hearst in the riding of Cochrane North on its 75th anniversary.

Hearst, which is effectively known as the moose capital of Canada, is a thriving community with a population of about 6,000. At the turn of the century, it was called the village of Grant, but was renamed Hearst in November 1911 in honour of William Howard Hearst, the Minister for Lands, Forests and Mines at the time. Hearst was officially incorporated as a town on August 3, 1922.

Exciting events commemorating Hearst's 75th anniversary have been taking place since January and will continue until the end of the year. I would like to congratulate the mayor, Jean-Marie Blier, town councillors André Rhéaume and Donald Gratton and all the other councillors and numerous organizations for their efforts and sense of community spirit in organizing and bringing together this celebration.

Hearst is one of Ontario's largest producers of lumber, which has allowed it to become a modern centre with excellent medical, education and recreation facilities.

It is important to note that Hearst is a predominantly francophone community. The French language and culture thrive in Hearst, one of the first communities in Ontario to proclaim itself officially bilingual in 1978.

To everyone in Hearst, happy 75th anniversary.

PARAMEDIC SERVICES

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): My statement today is to the people of Ontario. Your health care system

is strong and viable. This government is reinvesting health care dollars into key areas to save lives, and it is working.

For example, a recent Orillia Today newspaper story reads, "Firefighters from Rama first nations are on the cutting edge of a move to enhance the lifesaving skills of firefighters across the province."

I and fellow MPP Joe Tascona, the member for Simcoe Centre, recently attended an awards presentation at Rama first nations to honour front-line emergency workers. My colleague the Honourable Jim Wilson, Minister of Health, was proud to recognize the achievements of four first nation firefighters and six Orillia ambulance attendants for saving 14 patients in Simcoe-Muskoka last year.

With this government's commitment to invest in health care, \$15.5 million has been slotted for paramedic training, which was only available in the Toronto area and is now being taken right across rural Ontario. It's working.

The first fire department trained by Royal Victoria Hospital Base was Rama first nations, which responds to the Rama casino. Grand Bend visitor Edyth Hanson suffered a cardiac arrest last fall, and Rama firefighter Brad Savage is credited for saving her life, thanks to his new training in the use of a defibrillator.

The paramedic program in this province is giving us all an opportunity to survive, and it's working. The introduction of defibrillation has allowed patients to cheat death, return home and live productive lives.

This government is targeting health care investment into high-needs areas for better health care in the province despite the cuts from the Liberal government.

KENT COUNTY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): The following obituary, written by Sheila McBrayne, appeared in the Ridgeway Independent on May 7:

"Kent county passed away peacefully on April 28, 1997, after a brief illness contracted from Queen's Park, Ontario, from a carrier named Dr Peter Meyboom.

"Born in 1851, daughter of the pioneers who forged this countryside. She was a kind person who belonged to no one church, but incorporated many denominations. She was a hardworking, loyal and active community member. She was a charter member of democracy. Ironically, her diplomacy may have been a factor in contracting the Queen's Park virus.

"Kent county is survived by 22 children: Ridgeway, Howard, Highgate, Orford, Zone, Thamesville, Camden, Bothwell, Dresden, Wallaceburg, Dover, Tilbury, Tilbury East, Merlin, Romney, Wheatley, Chatham township, Raleigh, Erie Beach, Erieau, Harwich and Blenheim. Also survived by one foster child, Chatham, and 109,350 grandchildren.

"Other survivors (currently being inoculated to prevent the spread of this virus) include neighbours Elgin, Middlesex, Lambton and Essex counties.

"Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the transition boards. Visitation is being held until January 1, 1998, when Kent county will be officially put to rest."

TOURISM

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to bring to the attention of the assembly this government's complete lack of commitment to tourism in this province, particularly to northern Ontario tourism.

The government, as many members will know, is talking about privatizing the 18 Ontario travel information centres, which serve as a vital communication link between the operator and consumer and the tourist industry, and is putting these up for sale.

This is after the government has taken the same approach with the 1-800-ONTARIO service, which was privatized in June 1996, and with the selling off of the Ontario accommodations publications to Bell Global Solutions.

But to make matters worse, in central Algoma, the St Joseph Island Chamber of Commerce points out that on the latest Ontario roadmap St Joseph Island is not identified, while the neighbouring Sugar Island is identified. What is mystifying is why the government of Ontario on its roadmap would identify Sugar Island, which is part of the state of Michigan, but not St Joseph Island, which is part of the province of Ontario. Surely if this government wants to promote tourism and they are determined to privatize everything, they should at least get the road map right.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS MONTH

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to announce that May has been proclaimed Cystic Fibrosis Month.

Cystic fibrosis, or CF, is a genetic disease affecting primarily the respiratory and digestive systems. The most devastating damage takes place in the lungs, and virtually everyone with CF eventually dies of lung cancer. CF takes the lives of more young Canadians than any other inherited disease, and as yet there is no cure for the disease.

About one in every 25 Canadians carries the gene which causes cystic fibrosis and approximately one in every 2,500 children born in Canada has CF. There are 3,000 children, adolescents and adults with CF in Canada, 1,000 of whom live here in Ontario.

Since 1960 the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, a national voluntary health organization, has worked to improve the lives of young Canadians who are affected by this fatal disorder. With developments in research and treatment, the median age of survival has increased from four years in 1960 to over 30 years today. This is tremendous, but obviously not enough.

This year in Ontario the foundation provides incentive funding for 11 specialized CF clinics, representing a financial commitment of \$630,000 for clinical and transplant services. A further \$3.5 million is committed to research grants in Ontario.

I would ask each of the members in the House today to join me in showing their support for the fight against cystic fibrosis and in recognizing the extraordinary work of all members of the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GAMBLING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, you may be aware that yesterday in this House I raised some questions regarding the accessibility of gambling to Ontario's young people.

This morning's paper, coincidentally, ran a story about how in the near future it could be possible to access horse racing by way of the Internet and to place a bet. Officials in the horse racing industry have made it clear that they cannot possibly police the user. You can't tell whether you've got an eight-year-old on the Internet or a 38-year-old.

Given that it's simply not possible to provide that kind of policing, will you take the necessary steps to prohibit that kind of service from being offered in Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the minister can respond.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): A couple of things: First of all, the Ontario Jockey Club made the announcement in terms of the wagering that can be done through the telephone. Certainly this is not a new wagering initiative.

This is under the auspices of the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency, a federal agency which regulates this type of betting. However, within Ontario, because we think it's very important, it's my understanding that the Ontario Racing Commission this week is considering a mandatory rule of racing that will limit parimutuel wagering to anyone who is 18 or over. Certainly this is very important to us and there will be severe penalties for doing this. 1350

Secondly, as I understand from the conference the Ontario Jockey Club had yesterday, they will make sure — if you've looked at the applications they have had, you have to have an account in order to do any type of wagering. Those accounts will require a piece of identification and things like credit cards as well to establish an account to bet. I understand they will be using that to ensure —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: The point is, you can't tell who's on the Internet that you happen to be communicating with. You can't tell whether there's an eight-year-old on the keyboard or a 38-year-old. What we're getting at here is a fundamental question of values.

Let's set aside the general issue of gambling for a moment. It is my sense, and I believe the Premier would agree with this, that the great majority of Ontarians do not favour giving access to gambling to our young people, children of the age of 12, 13, 14, 15. We've got a problem in the province right now. You've got to be 19 years old to operate a VLT, 18 years old to buy a lottery ticket, 16 years old to bet at the racetrack. We also know that there are 13-year-olds who are betting today at racetracks and we have unsupervised lottery ticket vending machines.

The question is very simple: Do you not feel we should have a law in Ontario today saying there is a

minimum age for gambling of any kind whatsoever, and furthermore, if you can't restrict access to that age, you can't have the machine?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Clearly under Bill 75 there are severe penalties for any under-age gamblers. We went through this whole process. Members of the opposition are screaming about something, but we dealt with this. There are severe penalties, up to \$250,000 for corporations that allow that type of violation.

There are other issues as well. There is no wagering that's legal on the Net right now. What they're talking about is a form of telephone wagering which has been approved by the federal agency since 1982. Clearly we believe it's important not to have minors betting. That's why we brought in Bill 75, to make sure we created the penalties to enforce these things. You can't even sell lottery products to under-age people.

Under the rules, there are severe penalties. The VL act says the same thing. Certainly the Ontario Racing Commission is going to bring in some very severe penalties to make sure that doesn't happen to the parimutuel betting.

Mr McGuinty: I'm not sure what's in Bill 75, but I can tell you right now, whatever it is, it's not preventing children in Ontario today from going to unsupervised lottery vending machines and buying tickets. The vending machine doesn't distinguish between an eight-year-old and a 38-year-old. Yesterday we sent one of our staff into a laundromat. There was nobody else in the place. He put in the money and he bought a Battleship lottery ticket. Battleship is a popular game targeting children. That's what's going on in Ontario today.

My question is very simple: Do you think that's a good thing? Do you think we ought to be encouraging children in Ontario to gamble? It's not much more complicated than that. If you don't think that's a good thing, then you've got to do something. Responsibility lies with you to ensure that can't happen, and Bill 75 isn't doing it. I believe we should have in Ontario a law that says there's a minimum age for gambling, no matter what kind of gambling, and furthermore, if you can't restrict access, you can't have the machine. Do you agree, Minister?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Bill 75 strengthens the prohibitions against the sale of lottery products to minors which make it illegal to sell lottery products to anyone under 18 years of age.

Clearly one of the initiatives resulting from Bill 75 as well is that when we have the amalgamation to make the new Alcohol and Gaming Commission, we'll now have more resources to put towards enforcement. That's important, to bring in more inspectors. Yes, we believe we should be doing something about it. We have, through Bill 75. The Ontario Racing Commission is doing something right now to make sure this does not happen through parimutuel betting. We're taking steps to make sure this does not happen and we believe it's very important.

TRUCKING SAFETY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I cannot believe you're

comfortable with the minister's response and I hope to return to this in the near future with you.

Truck safety in the province today: Yesterday we introduced a bill. You've now had the opportunity to review that bill. It contains no surprises. It contains, in part, Bill 125, a bill which you and your government introduced and later withdrew. It contains recommendations specified by Target '97. There are no surprises in there. You've had the opportunity to study it. Are you prepared to support that bill? If there is any characterization for which there is consensus when it comes to this issue, that can be summed up in one word, and that one word is simply this: urgent. We have to do something and we have got to do it quickly. The bill has been introduced. Will you support it?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the minister will want to comment, and I'll give him opportunities in supplementaries, but let me say on his behalf that no Minister of Transportation has done more and introduced more measures. He has passed two road safety bills already in 1996. Your government, in five years, did nothing. The NDP government had five years and did nothing. No minister has taken a more aggressive stand far more aggressive than any other province and any other state, and been more out in front of this issue, and nobody have I been prouder of than the current Minister of Transportation, Mr Palladini.

Now I might add that here we have a Liberal Party saying, "We're opposed to your bill because it's unconstitutional, but vote for our bill," which is also unconstitutional. I want to tell you —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Premier.

Mr McGuinty: That kind of bluster hearkens back to a political era which I thought was long past. This is a serious issue. We have an opposition day motion —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Hamilton East, come to order. Member for Brampton North.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you will know that we have scheduled for this House this afternoon an opposition day motion sponsored by my party. We're going to be talking about this very issue. We're going to consume the entire afternoon with that. We're going to talk about our bill, we're going to talk about the urgency of the situation and of course we're going to criticize your government for its failure to act.

We don't have to do that. Do you know what we might do instead? We could debate this bill right here this afternoon, and we're prepared to do that. We're prepared to address the substance of this issue and to give this bill second reading this afternoon so we can move forward on this issue. We're not claiming that our bill is perfect, but we believe it can go out to committee on a quick basis and be improved. Do you not think that's a good idea? We'll deal with this bill this afternoon, second reading.

Hon Mr Harris: I think the debate this afternoon could be productive. I'm sure, given your stand — and I know your bill is not perfect, because I've read it. When the minister comes in with his comprehensive bill next week, the debate today will be quite useful. We appreciate

ate your support. But let me tell you this: The minister's bill is far more comprehensive, far tougher than anything we've seen from you. It will be introduced next week, and you will have the opportunity to have your hearings, as you have always wanted. We will hold you to how we can have this bill expedited and passed through the Legislature.

Mr McGuinty: The minister said a number of things, but one of the things he said was, "Wheels separating from trucks is a very serious problem, one that shows no signs of improving and one that can't wait any longer."

Premier, we agree. What we've heard from your government to date is that this matter is of the utmost urgency. A bill was tabled and then subsequently withdrawn. We tabled a bill; you won't support it. You tell us you've got another bill in the works. Here's another offer for you. Table your bill today. We will waive our opposition day motion. We agree to have second reading debate today and to vote today. Will you agree to that, Premier?

1400

Hon Mr Harris: I guess the difference between our government and you when you were in government is (a) we act and (b) we take the time to do it properly.

The bill will be ready next week. It will be comprehensive, it will be legal, it will meet constitutional challenges that you say even your bill will not, and we will have the hearings if you want the hearings.

But listen. Here is a party that — in 1989 the Liberal government stopped enforcing weight limits on dump trucks. It wasn't until we got elected that we enforced that. The NDP wouldn't enforce it; we had to enforce it. Here is a party that when we brought in the small bill, and now it will be incorporated into the comprehensive one, what did you say? You said: "No, we want hearings on this, because we hear that this bill will be ineffective. We want hearings on the bill." We said: "Fine. We will bring in the comprehensive bill. You can have the hearings that you wanted." Now you want hearings on your bill.

Now you can have the hearings you've all asked for, but you will have it on a legal, comprehensive, well-thought-out bill, far in excess of anything the flip-flopping Liberals have ever proposed for this province.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. When I asked you a question a couple of weeks ago about your coup d'état in Chatham-Kent, you said your local member tells you that everything's fine, that your scheme has brought support throughout the community.

Minister, I visited Ridgetown last week, and they tell me a different story, that you and your local member are very wrong. I sat in a room with about 20 community leaders, most of whom voted for the Conservative Party in the last election, and they are angry about Dr Doom's megacity that has been imposed on them. To quote Jim Brown, who owns a newspaper in Ridgetown, he says, "I will refrain from using the term 'Tory jackboot' even if it is closer to what is taking place here" —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Mr Marchese: It's a quotation.

The Speaker: It doesn't matter if it's a quotation; you can't use it as a third party or a first party. The fact is that it's out of order and unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr Marchese: I withdraw that, Mr Speaker.

Minister, I have a question for you. Will you halt the restructuring process and go down to Chatham-Kent so you can inform yourself of what's going on?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It was the communities and municipalities in Kent county that requested that the province appoint a commissioner to come in and resolve the deadlock they had reached as a result of trying to negotiate a restructuring. It was as a result of their request, a local request to have somebody come in and assist them to do that.

The commissioner, Dr Meyboom, came in, held public hearings, met with all the councils, developed a proposal and presented it to the councils. The majority of the councils agreed with it. My colleague from Chatham tells me that the vast majority of people in Chatham-Kent are extremely happy with the restructuring, very happy with it, and that's the way that it should be.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Leach: The restructuring commission made a recommendation. That recommendation is binding on the municipalities and on the province.

Mr Marchese: Most of the 20 people I met with are municipal councillors. They told me very clearly that you are wrong in what you're saying and that the member is wrong as well. You're disregarding that. What you are doing is leaving a stench of autocratic behaviour all over Ontario. You've done so in Toronto, you've done so in Chatham-Kent, and you're doing it in Ottawa. That's the other question I'm moving myself to right now.

On May 13 you wrote a letter to Merle Nicholds, mayor of Kanata, about Ottawa-Carleton restructuring and you said the following:

"Any restructuring order would have to set out an interim council and other arrangements. This could include either the calling of a special election or appointing a new council or councils from among those elected in November."

What this clearly means is that you're prepared to make the voters' choices into a mere shortlist for your hired commissars, who will pick the actual council.

Will you today announce that you didn't know what you were signing and that you won't appoint a council either in Ottawa-Carleton or anywhere else in the province?

Hon Mr Leach: I am really surprised and disappointed at the lack of knowledge the member has of Bill 26. What I was saying in that letter just points out exactly what's in the existing legislation, what's presently in Bill 26 that allows the municipalities, if there is a restructuring done between election periods, the options they have. One of those options is to hold another election. The other option is that they can appoint members to an interim council, and that's very clearly laid out in the existing legislation.

Mr Marchese: Minister, I just quoted you, the letter you have written. The letter says:

"Any restructuring order would have to set out an interim council and other arrangements. This could include either the calling of a special election or appointing the new council or councils from among those elected in November."

Are you saying that this is the kind of process you are leading to, that that is what is acceptable to you?

That's why I say you are leaving a stench of autocratic behaviour across all of Ontario. You nod your head. He nods his head.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: He talks about this member being a bonehead, if I heard him correctly. But that member is being followed by entire communities all over Ontario where restructuring is happening, and if there is a bonehead in this House, the communities are seeing one right across from me.

The Speaker: Member for Fort York, I did not —

Mr Marchese: I heard the member very clearly.

The Speaker: I'm sure you did. I'm not questioning whether the member for Fort York is being forthright about it. I just didn't hear it. If the minister did in fact call him a bonehead, it's out of order. I would ask the minister to withdraw.

Hon Mr Leach: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Member for Fort York.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): That is terrible. We all know who the bonehead is.

The Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, please come to order. Thank you.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): That's the kind of comment you would expect from an old fossil.

The Speaker: You know, this is degenerating. I would ask the members of the House to please stop the name-calling.

Member for Fort York, put your question, please.

Mr Marchese: How much time do I have, Speaker?

The Speaker: You've got about 10 seconds.

Mr Marchese: Minister, I'll try again. Will you confirm that when the people of Ottawa-Carleton elect a council this fall, those people, all of them, will serve their full terms unless they themselves resign?

Hon Mr Leach: To repeat the options available to the municipality after the election this fall, if they decide to restructure between elections, it's their option to call another election. It's their option. The council that's elected has the authority to call another election. They also have the wherewithal if they so choose to select an interim council from their members. All of that is very clearly laid out. What we were doing in my memorandum to the mayors was to point out the options available to them if they don't restructure in time for the 1998 elections. Surely, if the member had even glanced through Bill 26, that would have been very obvious to him.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES FOR SEXUAL MINORITIES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Premier. This morning the Coalition for Lesbian

and Gay Rights in Ontario issued a report called Systems Failure, funded by Health Canada. It's a thorough study of the sexual minorities in Ontario's experiences with the health care system and the social services system in this province. Copies of the report have been delivered to the ministers of health, community and social services, education and training, and citizenship and culture.

Almost one quarter of the people surveyed had not told their doctor about their sexual orientation. Two thirds of those said they had not voiced concerns or asked questions about health issues because they feared that knowledge of their sexual orientation would negatively affect the way they were treated. Fifteen percent of the people surveyed said they had not gone for regular physical checkups because they believed homophobia would negatively affect the way they were treated, and 18% had not gone back for follow-up visits.

Premier, does it concern you that so many Ontarians are not receiving adequate health care or feel they do not have access to health care because of the discrimination they have experienced in the system?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Yes, it does, and it concerns the Minister of Health and it concerns the ministry and it concerns this government. I can tell you that we are doing everything we can in awareness, in support for gays and lesbians, in support for HIV and AIDS patients; another \$10.9 million provided by the ministry for 11 outpatient HIV/AIDS clinics throughout the province.

The issue, though, is one that need concern us all. Certainly there are proactive and positive approaches we can all, as 130 ambassadors, take with all agencies within our ridings.

1410

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Harris: There are also, of course, anti-discrimination measures. If there are allegations or abuses or violations that should be brought to the Human Rights Commission —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mrs Boyd: I'm glad you're concerned, because you can take leadership. In fact one of the recommendations in the report, a very clear recommendation, calls on the provincial government to provide proactive, top-down leadership on this issue. The problem is that you have a Health Services Restructuring Commission out there that's recommending the closure of hospitals where some of the greatest advances in providing health care to sexual minorities have been made, primarily the Wellesley and Women's College hospitals.

Tom Warner, one of the people presenting the report this morning, said this about the Wellesley:

"There is no other hospital in Ontario that we are aware of that has been proactive in this area. To lose the Wellesley does not provide an incentive to other hospitals to provide the same thing."

Premier, you've instructed the Health Services Restructuring Commission to take into consideration the needs of specific communities like rural areas of the province or chronic care patients. Will you make sure the commission is instructed to consider the needs of taxpayers who belong to sexual minorities when it is making its decisions?

Hon Mr Harris: As you know, all of us are free to give advice and recommendations and thoughts to the Health Services Restructuring Commission. Indeed it is set up that way. I would encourage everyone who has any thoughts or any advice to do so directly to the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

Mrs Boyd: You know very well you've given direct instructions around rural hospitals, so that doesn't really answer the question. You know that to do nothing costs us all a great deal, because there's a human cost to the individuals who are highly stressed and damaged in their self-esteem, who can't get the services they need. There's the cost to OHIP and government ministries and private insurance companies when people need to shop around for unbiased services, to undergo repeated or unnecessary medical procedures, or when they are discouraged from receiving follow-up care or undergo protracted mental health counselling because service is inappropriate.

Hospitals have developed specialized services because the communities they serve have demanded those services. We see Wellesley Hospital with a proactive approach to serving sexual minorities, Montfort serving the francophone population, Women's College providing unparalleled care for women and Doctors' Hospital working with immigrant communities — they're all on the chopping block, Premier. When will you show leadership and tell the commission, as you did with rural hospitals —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for London Centre. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: We have put forward government policies to the Health Services Restructuring Commission. We have indicated, as has the Health Services Restructuring Commission and I think a lot of the hospitals themselves, that the services — the men and women who provide the services: the doctors, the nurses, the professionals, the paraprofessionals — in the view of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, do not come from bricks and mortar but they come from policies and they come from people. We have asked the Health Services Restructuring Commission to bear that in mind.

The policies and directions of the government are consistent with providing service to all kinds of people throughout the province: French-speaking, as you say, in the case of Montfort; in the case of the gay and lesbian community those areas that specialize in AIDS and HIV; and seniors' and women's health and other areas. We've asked the commission —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. New question, official opposition.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier will know, the last of 23 first nations persons who were charged at Ipperwash was acquitted. Every single first nations person charged has either been acquitted or the charges have been dropped before going to court. Today the OPP officer who was convicted is before the courts for sentencing.

The trials are over. We now are demanding a commitment by you, Premier, to hold a public inquiry. We are prepared to present evidence that shows that the government and the Premier's office played a key role in the Ipperwash affair. The government made the major decisions and is responsible for the handling of this situation. The question is this: Will you now commit, Premier, to holding a public inquiry so we and others can lay the evidence before an independent inquiry that can fairly determine the role you and your government played in this affair?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think we've been quite clear on this. Certainly from the legal advice, we are obligated, we feel, to wait until the legal issues and cases are resolved. I've indicated that to the Legislature. If you have information you think should be made public, go ahead.

Mr Phillips: We already have made it and we're anxious for a forum in which to present it and have some adjudication of it.

I'll be very blunt, Premier. You are going to do whatever you can to avoid a public inquiry. We've examined the terms of reference of other inquiries. For example, in the Westray mine inquiry the criminal trial proceedings occurred alongside the public inquiry. The terms of reference said, for example, "No evidence can be heard by the Westray public inquiry until all evidence at the related criminal trial is heard." It provided the forum and the vehicle for that.

Premier, will you today table the legal opinion that you've referred to so we can examine that legal opinion, and will you examine the terms of reference of the Westray mine inquiry to determine if we can use the same model here? Frankly, we are not going to quit on this. We are going to continue to demand a public inquiry so we can get to the bottom of this very, very sorry affair.

Hon Mr Harris: I think we've been clear, the Attorney General has been very clear, and we've been quite consistent and quite open with all the information that we can. If you have tabled and made public all the information you have, I'm happy to defend any allegations you have on the basis of that information. There's not a single shred of evidence there that there was anything untoward or inappropriate in the actions of this government. If you have anything else, go ahead and table it. In the meantime, there are court cases and we have a legal obligation to ensure that those cases go forward.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Premier on the same matter. Everything we learn about what happened at Ipperwash on September 6 adds to the need for an immediate commitment by the government to a public inquiry. It's time the government stopped stonewalling on this.

According to the testimony that led to the acquittal of the young Chippewa youth, the police grabbed Bernard George, a band councillor, called him a savage, kicked and beat him and dragged him by the hair until he lost consciousness. This happened during the same period that led to the fatal shooting of Dudley George.

The issue goes beyond the guilt or innocence of one individual or group of individuals. We have to know what decisions were made by whom that led to this sorry, sorry affair and these events. When will the Premier commit to a public inquiry so that all of the facts can be known and we don't leave one police officer out to dry?

The Speaker: Thank you, member for Algoma Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: When the court cases are over.

Mr Wildman: The cases have been dealt with. There is one case that is going to be heard in the fall. There is absolutely nothing to prevent the Premier and the government from committing now to a public inquiry that will not involve evidence that will deal with that particular case. It's time the Premier stood up and said he is prepared to have all the facts come out so that we know what led to the killing of Dudley George and to the force that was used by the police in this case, instead of the approach the police had used in the past.

The government wants this issue to fade away. It's not going to fade away; it's not going to disappear. There are demands that all the evidence be brought forward so we can know the truth of what led to this unfortunate set of circumstances. The only way to do that and to silence the demands for the truth is to have a public inquiry. Will you now commit to a public inquiry and make it clear that your government wants all the facts to come out?

Hon Mr Harris: Both myself and the Attorney General made it clear that we want to ensure that all the facts come out. At the appropriate time we'll do that.

1420

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP FUND

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Environment. In my riding of Hastings-Peterborough protection of the environment is very important, particularly regarding the water quality. Recently it was announced our government has successfully re-established an environmental cleanup fund which will assist in the cleanup of contaminated sites across the province. Would you please explain to the members of the House further details of this initiative?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I'd like to thank the member for raising this issue. It's an important issue when we're talking about a fund that the ministry has had for some period of time, called the environmental cleanup fund. I want to inform members of the House that this fund was decreased by the previous government from some \$23 million down to \$1.9 million. That's how they saved money: They decreased the potential funding for emergencies that would occur across this province.

In two short years we have increased that funding from \$1.9 million to \$10.5 million. We recognize the importance of cleaning up abandoned contaminated sites, not only for the environment but for the economy. The increase to the fund will enable this ministry to better respond to environmental emergencies and to expedite ongoing contaminated site remediation in our province.

Mr Danford: I'm pleased to hear that funding has been increased to address the needs of cleaning up many

areas in our province. The Deloro site that is located in my riding of Hastings-Peterborough used arsenic for refining the minerals during its operations. The Deloro site is one of the most contaminated sites in the province, and over the past 10 years there hasn't been one thing done to help actually clean up this site.

Would you please tell the House whether funds from the environmental cleanup fund have been earmarked for any particular projects, and if so, would you outline who will be benefiting in the province of Ontario?

Hon Mr Sterling: The Deloro mine site is perhaps one of the most unknown environmental disasters which occurred in this province over the past 50 years. There is arsenic which is released into the Moira River, which eventually comes out of the river and into Lake Ontario around Belleville.

Over the next year funds that have been used annually for ongoing rehabilitation of this site will be allocated to the next stage of the work. The action plan for the site will be to protect the public's health and safety and fulfil our environmental commitment to that region.

Other areas of concern that the fund is looking at are areas for a PCB-contaminated site in Smithville and the Randle Reef in Hamilton Harbour. Our government recognizes the importance of re-establishing the environmental cleanup fund. We are not going to decimate it as the previous government did. We are going to have money on hand to address emergencies that occur in this province and we will address them.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a question for the Premier. Now that Bill 106 has been passed, the massive job of reassessing all Ontario properties by April 1998 will begin. This short time frame and the partial contracting out of interior inspections will guarantee that Ontario property taxpayers will have the poorest-quality assessment roll that has ever been returned after reassessment.

Two private companies have been awarded contracts to do some of this work. Private contractors receive one day's training from the ministry, after which they may hire and train inspectors to do the work. We have a situation where contractors with one day's training will be hiring and training inexperienced people to collect data that will be the basis of the reassessment. Premier, do you think it's prudent or fair to Ontario taxpayers to have to have their tax assessments based on such an unprofessional procedure?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Finance has answered this question before. He's not here today. I think his commitment is that the assessments will be done professionally; they'll be done correctly.

I would suggest to you, I suppose, that they're never done perfectly, which is why there seem to be appeals all the time regardless of how experienced the assessors are. But there is no question that we are in fact, because of the inaction of two former governments, having to play catch-up with reassessments. We are contacting professionals in the private sector to assist us with that.

Mr Kwinter: It's interesting; I have an ad that has been placed by one of the successful contractors. It says: "We require a highly organized, self-motivated individual...must have excellent communication skills, neat appearance, and a reliable car. General knowledge of residential home construction required."

There is not one single mention of any kind of expertise or knowledge in assessment matters. Not only that, but studies have shown that the contractors are going to get three times as much money for doing the job with non-professionals as the ministry pays their own professionals.

Do you think this is reasonable, that citizens of Ontario, property taxpayers, are going to be subjected to unprofessional assessments and are going to have to pay three times as much for the privilege? Does this make any common sense?

Hon Mr Harris: I can tell you what does not make common sense: that for the last 10 years — and you may argue longer than 10; you may even have gone back to a former government — certainly the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party refused to move on reassessing, so there is a backlog to have a fair assessment system, and we are playing catch-up.

Here are the criteria: Only private sector suppliers who have experience in property appraisal, such as real estate appraisers and adjusters, are eligible to respond to the request for tender to provide onsite property inspection services. They're inspecting residential properties, not valuing them. They are assisting the professionals in the valuation. The ministry is providing training in both the classroom and the field on ministry procedures and forms. The suppliers will have to follow processes that are established by the ministry, and we have every confidence they will do so in a competent and professional fashion.

Yes, it's regrettable that we have to now bring in outside help because you guys wouldn't do anything for 10 years.

RETRAINING AND EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Premier. Ed Sharpe, a 26-year-old married father of two children, was in my office on Friday. Last year he left his job at the hospital due to the cuts to health care. He accepted an exit package that included a significant contribution from the Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel. He chose out of alternatives offered to take a course at Sault College in mechanical engineering.

Over the last month that plan has begun to unravel. You announced in your budget an end to HSTAP, and last week he discovered that the college, because of funding cuts, will no longer offer mechanical engineering or any other related options Ed might be interested in.

He is now out of a job, must go out of town to take this program and pay for it himself.

1430

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Martin: What have you to say to Ed and the hundreds of other families you've left twisting in the wind by dropping HSTAP and by cutting funding to colleges?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Education and Training will have a dandy answer for you.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I'm sure, as the honourable member knows, we can't discuss individual cases, although I'd be more than happy to discuss this individual case with him at some point if he'd send to my office the details.

I can tell you this: I'm very pleased to inform the member that we have increased our support for students, both mature students and regular students, in our colleges and universities. We've increased the amount of funding available to them through OSAP and other programs by double over the last two years. There are programs available to help students in all circumstances in this province because we understand the importance of education and training. We understand the importance of that for people who are re-entering the job market. I'd be more than happy to discuss with the member opposite this case at any point.

Mr Martin: I'm disappointed that the Premier chose to dish this off. There was a letter written on May 14 by the Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel, signed by the co-chairs, that said in part, "We would like to express our concern about the difficult position in which over 1,200 laid-off health sector employees now find themselves as a result of the cancellation of funding for HSTAP."

Minister, the fate of Ed Sharpe and his young family is in your hands. He agreed to leave his job because your government said you would help him get something else. Will you live up to your commitment to this man and to his family?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'd be more than glad to discuss this case with the member opposite at some point if he'd like to send me the details of it. Perhaps there is a program we can point him to, because I can tell you there are any number of support systems available.

Obviously one of the things that is offered to people when they're making a transition from one job to another is a variety of different supports in which they get to choose what the training is that will best help them get to their own future. I think that's a critical part of that program. I'd be very happy to discuss this with the member opposite and to explain to him any of the number of support systems that are available in Ontario.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Solicitor General and it has to do with the important issue of the role of victims in the criminal justice system.

Our government's plan places a high priority on improving safety in Ontario's communities and properly dealing with violent crime. In the election of June 1995 I promised the constituents of Hamilton Mountain that once in government we would make certain that victims of crime would be given an enhanced role to play in the criminal justice process. I also promised that if elected, we would not ignore them as the previous two governments had done.

Minister, could you please tell my constituents high atop Hamilton Mountain what this government is doing to follow through on that very important promise?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): To those folks high atop Hamilton Mountain and others in this province, I want to assure them that this government has a strong commitment to victims of crime and our actions are clearly indicating that. We are restoring the balance between the rights of offenders and the needs of victims of crime. Last year, unlike the two previous governments, we moved ahead on a Victims' Bill of Rights. We have enhanced the victim crisis assistance and referral service, which assists police to ensure victims get the appropriate assistance and service as soon as possible. The four current sites in Kingston, Sault Ste Marie, Brantford and Metro were expanded to eight new locations last year in Windsor, Belleville, Sarnia, Caledon, Haldimand, Norfolk, Peterborough and Barrie. There will be an additional eight new locations this year. The total funding for this fiscal year is \$4.5 million for the 20 sites.

We continue to fund at the \$9-million level 34 sexual assault centres. We introduced automated information referral service and the victim notification service and we're committed to spending —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr Pettit: It's encouraging to me, and I'm sure to the people of Hamilton Mountain, to hear that steps are finally being taken to refocus the justice system to assist victims instead of criminals. But I'd further like to ask the Solicitor General about a related commitment we made: a commitment to keep victims properly informed through the various stages of the justice system. Minister, would you please update us on the government's progress in this area?

Hon Mr Runciman: In the recent budget, the government announced a new victim support line, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to help victims overcome the impact of crime. By calling 1-888-579-2888, victims of crime have a number of options, including speaking directly in person to a counsellor who can refer the victim to programs in their community.

In addition, Ontario is the first jurisdiction in Canada to provide an automated victim notification service. A victim can register to be automatically updated when an offender is scheduled for release or when there is any change in an offender's status. They can also have input into the parole process by expressing concerns about the release of an offender into their community.

It's very important that victims are aware of this new service, and therefore I am sending out information to all members of the Legislature this week.

OTTAWA BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. There are teachers, students, board officials, taxpayers and parents with the Ottawa Board of Education who have made it perfectly clear that you have no legal right to the

\$31 million in locally raised education taxes which you are demanding from the board. Now, finally, one of your own caucus colleagues is saying you're wrong in trying to extract the money. He's the member for Ottawa-Rideau, and I'd like to tell you what he said: "The truth of the matter is that the board is right. All we're doing here is causing bad feelings. I just want to see it off the table. Let's get on to more important stuff."

Minister, I couldn't agree more. I think the member for Ottawa-Rideau is right, don't you?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I know the member opposite is aware of the fact that we for some time have been talking with the Ottawa board, have been negotiating with the Ottawa board. If you'll recall, during the social contract there were some permanent savings that were asked for by school boards across the province, including the Ottawa school board. Those were permanent savings.

Virtually all the boards in Ontario have found those savings and have now reflected those in their budgets. Unfortunately, Ottawa has not done that to this point in time, and we are continuing to negotiate with them to find mechanisms to do that. The mechanisms they found under the social contract were sharing some resources with coterminous and local boards, and that seems to be the approach that would be most appropriate now. However, we're willing to listen to any other suggestions they might have.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary

Mr Patten: The suggestion they have is that it's their tax money that they have paid already and you're trying to extract it. You have no right to the money, and you know it, because it's double taxation. The member for Ottawa-Rideau knows that. He's a lawyer and he's a judge. I would listen to him carefully.

You're creating anxiety in the community. The only provincial funding that board has received is for the McHugh centre, which serves 254 kids with special needs, and you withdrew \$3 million from them. You're going to use kids as pawns in this particular arrangement.

The Ottawa board has already had to cut \$22 million from its budget this year, and now you want to put into jeopardy other educational services by blackmailing the board to hand over \$31 million, to remove it totally from education to pay for the ill-timed tax cut. If you won't stand in your place and admit that you've made a mistake, will you at least have the courage to respond to the invitation from the taxpayers to go to Ottawa to explain to them face to face why locally raised education taxes are being taken away from the Ottawa Board of Education?

Hon Mr Snobelen: To correct the member opposite, first of all, no one is blackmailing anyone in this case. We have had discussions with the people in Ottawa. We have directed staff to continue those discussions to make a reality out of the permanent savings that were offered under the social contract and perhaps to use a template of the social contract as a way of finding those.

Let's be clear about this. There are no programs in jeopardy in Ottawa. In fact, much of what the honourable member opposite has talked about is really the unfairness

of the general legislative grant program, a program that treats some students in the province as second-class students. This government is ending that general legislative grant program. Your government, while it was in power, could have put in a fair funding system for students in Ontario. You didn't. We are, and it will be in place by next year.

1440

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would ask for unanimous consent for Mr Guzzo, the member for Ottawa-Rideau, to have a supplementary to this question.

The Speaker: Except that there is no supplementary to this question; it has been asked.

New question; third party, the member for Nickel Belt.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the member for Ottawa-Rideau to have a supplementary to this question? No. I heard a no.

GOVERNMENT MAIL SERVICE

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Chair of Management Board. You are in the process now of privatizing the mail and printing services of about 15 ministries, involving 130 employees, 30% of whom have either physical or developmental handicaps. On May 5, in response to a question from the member for Ottawa Centre, you said that extra points would be awarded to potential private sector employers who hired existing staff, but you made no mention whatsoever about staff with disabilities, such as Lisa Patterson, who has been with the Ministry of Health for 16 years and who is deaf.

I have here the approximately 90 pages of your request for proposal, your RFP, as it is usually known. Could you tell me where in these 90 pages there is any reference whatsoever to the employment of people with disabilities if a new employer takes over these tasks?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I don't have the 90 pages in front of me and I'm not able to tell the member what page and what paragraph, but I will say again that in terms of the existing employees, and that includes all employees, the firms that submit bids will be given higher marks if they employ current employees, any current employees. They will be given higher points and be more likely to win the bid if they hire current employees.

Mr Laughren: It wouldn't matter if the Chair of Management Board had these 90 pages in front of him; he wouldn't be able to find in them any reference to people with disabilities. That is truly monstrous. You are putting the most vulnerable people there are in your employ out on the street if the private sector employer doesn't guarantee to hire those with disabilities. It's plain and simple. Will you make a guarantee today that any successful bidder will be required to employ those existing employees who have disabilities? Will you make that commitment today?

Hon David Johnson: We haven't put anybody out on the street with regard to the mail services, the courier

services. We're going through a process because the services cost the taxpayers about \$12 million a year. There is a considerable cost to this particular service, about \$12 million a year. In the estimation of the government, through this process several million dollars will be saved, but at the same time we have concern for the challenged employees, for all employees associated with the province of Ontario.

There is a weighting; the weighting varies function by function. I will assure the member opposite that the weighting will be part of the final consideration, which has not been made at this point in time. That will be taken into account, and those employers who act more progressively in that vein will be given higher marks and will be more likely to win.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. In our government's budget of May 6, the finance minister announced many new initiatives and program funding. Recently you came to Hamilton and met with representatives and advocates of women's issues, including the women's centre, the sexual assault centre, the rape crisis centre and the native women's centre, to name only a few. They expressed lots of concerns and interests to you and me, and I thought it was a very good dialogue we had with them. In light of what we heard at that meeting, I'd like you to explain to this House how some of the budget announcements will affect women in my riding and indeed across the province.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): Thank you to the member for Hamilton West. We actually did have a very interesting afternoon and great opportunities to discuss the budget, the implications of the budget, and focus on services that were important for women in the areas of health care, child care, small business development, supports to families and strengthening community safety.

I would add that the budget supports job creation for women through tax cuts and through supports to small business. I'd also like this House to know that women are the most successful creators of small business, as we discussed that afternoon, at three times the rate of men, and they're creating new jobs at four times the national rate. So we had a very interesting discussion.

Our administrative savings have held us in good stead across all ministries, and with that, we were allocated some 27 million new dollars in the next four years to provide more services and prevention programs with regard to our violence-against-women initiatives. It was a good afternoon. Thank you very much for the question.

Mrs Ross: I agree with you. I think the meeting went very well, despite what some other members might say. The \$27 million will help in dealing with violence against women. We all recognize that the safety of our communities, especially the safety of women, is a critical factor contributing to a better Ontario. Can you outline for me and for the other members how this \$27 million will be utilized and how it will affect the women in my riding?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: In response to the specific question about the \$27 million, this is a four-year funding program. This year we have been allocated some 5.5 million new dollars. As we look at all the violence-against-women initiatives, the money that is also spent through the victims' justice fund, the dollars that are put into housing supports for abused women through the Ministry of Housing, we're looking at well over \$100 million and we're adding another \$5.5 million.

The challenge we will have in spending this money is in discussing across all ministries, with community agencies, around the areas of prevention and new programs and especially taking the advice of the people we're consulting with. Hopefully, some time within the next four weeks, we'll be able to make an announcement on a new framework of programs, over 50 agencies and 500 responses to the initiative we put out early in January, and we'll be able to make that announcement with the good advice we've had —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. New question.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the Attorney General. Over the past few months a number of issues around your centralization of the family support plan offices have been raised in the House. You have attempted to respond to those. Indeed one of our colleagues, I understand, faces criminal charges resultant from his attendance at that office — alleged incidents that have occurred.

That office is still in a mess. I have today sent over to your office copies of private information from one client of that office that was sent to somebody else, information that should not be in the hands of anyone other than the individual to whom this information applies.

Can you tell us what steps you'll take to ensure that information of this nature doesn't get sent to the wrong person when your office isn't responding to the other person's original question? What safeguards do you have in place? When you've had a chance to review this issue, will you share that with the House and tell us just how this type of travesty could occur in Ontario today?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I can tell you the last time I received a complaint from this member the facts he put to me were all wrong. I'm prepared to take a look at the details of what this particular issue involves. I'm prepared to get back to the member and advise him about what the problem is and how we can deal with the solution if indeed there is a problem at the family support plan's end of this particular involvement. I await to receive the facts from the member.

1450

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I

believe we have unanimous consent with regard to a motion pertaining to the privacy commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Let me seek consent first. Do we have unanimous consent with respect to the privacy commissioner? Agreed.

Hon David Johnson: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"To the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Ann Cavoukian, to act as interim Information and Privacy Commissioner until November 30, 1997, or until the Legislative Assembly appoints a permanent Information and Privacy Commissioner, whichever is earlier."

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

PETITIONS

TVONTARIO

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVOntario is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it truly a provincial asset;

"Whereas TVOntario continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues; and

"Whereas TVOntario provides unique services to people living in northern and remote communities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that TVOntario continues to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

That's signed by a good number of residents from the communities of Webequie and Moose Factory in my riding and other points north, and I have attached my name to that petition as well.

RENT REGULATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition from residents in the riding of East York. It reads:

"A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to take away the protections of the Rent Control Act; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to allow a landlord to charge a tenant who moves into an apartment whatever the landlord can get away with; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to raise the limit of how high rents can increase for all tenants; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to make it easier to demolish or convert existing affordable rental housing; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to take away the rent freeze which has been successful in forcing some landlords to repair their buildings;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to keep the existing rent laws which provide true protection for tenants in place."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition from the Triple X Hunt Club. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic of illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the streets and involve them in bureaucracy rather than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

I sign my name to this petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have the pleasure of introducing a petition which has been signed by 30,000 people in the Ottawa-Carleton area, and it's my pleasure to affix my signature to that, which reads as follows:

"Whereas Premier Harris had reneged on his election promise not to close hospitals; and

"Whereas the Harris hospital closing commission wants patients to leave Ontario hospitals quicker and sicker; and

"Whereas the Riverside Hospital in Ottawa is one of the most cost-effective community hospitals in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Riverside Hospital has been recognized nationally for the quality care that Ontarians deserve;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Premier Harris honour his promise and not close the Riverside Hospital."

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I have a very brief petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, support our OPP, and especially Sergeant Deane, in their testimony and action taken at Ipperwash park. We believe all the OPP acted properly in their line of duty."

The petition is signed by approximately 1,000 people.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature to it.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is another several-hundred-signatures petition regarding class sizes and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci, MPP for Sudbury, which promotes smaller class sizes passed second reading; and

"Whereas this bill, called Bill 110, was referred to the social development committee; and

"Whereas we, the stakeholders in education, want the government committee to hear what we have to say about smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas we want to hear what the government committee has to say regarding smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas all people in Ontario have a right to speak to the social development committee about smaller class sizes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the recommendation that the social development committee travel across Ontario to find out what the students, parents, teachers and taxpayers of Ontario are saying about smaller class sizes and Bill 110, the smaller class sizes act."

Of course, I affix my signature to this petition.

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The campaign to save TVOntario continues all across the province. We have thousands more signatures on the petitions. In light of the government's recent \$6.5-million further cut to TVO, I think it's important these petitions are listened to by the government.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality commercial-free television that continues to focus 70% of its programming schedule on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I'm very proud to sign my name to that.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): The firefighters are still concerned about Bill 84. I have a petition here that comes from Hammond, Orléans, Clarence Creek and Ottawa.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to the professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

1500

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and failure to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature to the petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000; and

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services; and

"Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Minister of Health to provide appropriate levels of health care funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west end community and to restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county."

I affix my signature.

MANDATORY INQUESTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is another petition gathered by the United Steelworkers of America.

"To the Honourable Solicitor General and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario has decided to scrap mandatory inquests as a result of fatalities in the mining and construction industry; and

"Whereas this unprecedented and callous decision sets workplace safety back 20 years;

"We, the undersigned, request that Solicitor General Bob Runciman and the Legislative Assembly, on behalf of all workers in the mining and construction industry, reverse his decision to remove mandatory inquests from the Coroners Act of Ontario."

Of course I affix my signature to it.

TUITION FEES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition here signed by hundreds of my constituents concerned about the costs of post-secondary education.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas post-secondary educational costs have been increasing due to economic and technological changes;

"Whereas student tuition fees have increased greatly over the past few years;

"Whereas the cost of living for students continues to increase;

"Whereas students are unable to continue their education due to high costs;

"Whereas future economic growth depends on access to post-secondary education;

"Whereas the panel on the Future Directions for Postsecondary Education recognizes the inadequacy in financial resources available to post-secondary education;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to renew its financial commitment for post-secondary education and to recognize that a multi-year commitment to the restoration of support must be guaranteed."

I'm proud to sign my name to this and credit Claudio Monteleone in Thunder Bay for beginning this drive.

TVONTARIO

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

This is submitted to me by the students from the École Sacré-Coeur in Kapuskasing. I affix my signature to the petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000; and

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services; and

"Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Minister of Health to provide the appropriate level of funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west end community and to restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county."

I add my signature to many more petitions, and I'm sure there will be more coming.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR UNE TOLÉRANCE ZÉRO EN MATIÈRE D'ABUS DE SUBSTANCES

Mr Young moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act to promote zero tolerance for substance abuse by children / Projet de loi 134, Loi encourageant une tolérance zéro concernant l'abus de substances par des enfants.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Do you have any comments to make?

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): Thank you, Speaker, I do. In greater numbers, our children are choosing deadly companions which threaten to destroy their minds and bodies. Substance abuse among our youth has surged to its highest level since 1980, and our society's apathy and ignorance have paved the way.

The bill I am introducing today is our wake-up call. It will bring these youth together with their parents to confront this tragic problem and get the help they need to solve it.

OPPOSITION DAY

TRUCKING SAFETY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I move opposition day motion number 5:

Whereas there has been a proliferation of accidents and fatalities related to truck safety in Ontario; and

Whereas this has caused a great lack of confidence in road safety in Ontario; and

Whereas the government has repeatedly stated its intention to deal decisively and swiftly with truck safety in Ontario; and

Whereas the government has had a truck safety bill on the order paper since February 24, 1997; and

Whereas the Minister of Transportation has attempted to exploit the issue for political purposes, choosing numerous photo opportunities to advance the need for truck safety; and

Whereas the government has failed to address the issue in a meaningful way; and

Whereas the Liberal caucus has stated its desire to cooperate and expeditiously pass legislation ensuring road safety in Ontario;

Be it therefore resolved that this House calls upon the government to bring forward Bill 125 immediately for second and third reading and that the House further calls upon the government to respond to the Target '97 recommendations with legislation so that a full, public debate can occur.

Mr Speaker, I will keep my remarks brief at the opening and will conclude at the end. We offered even today to give up this legislative day to deal with the government's truck legislation. We call upon the government to bring forward a bill as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Further debate?

1510

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I find out within about 30 seconds that I'm up to speak, not so much as a critic, but I understood the Liberal caucus was going to lead off on their own opposition day. Anyway, I will commence.

We need to start this particular debate today on the opposition motion we have before us by recognizing what the problem is. We have a problem in Ontario in so far as there are a number of unsafe vehicles on the road that are endangering the safety of the motoring public. That is not to say every truck out there, every truck driving the highways of Ontario, is unsafe. There certainly are some responsible carriers out there who are trying to do the job properly, but there are some bad apples in the bunch. Part of what we are trying to discuss here today is how you get at those bad apples.

Unfortunately, we've seen too many fatalities on the highways of Ontario. There has been everything from flying truck wheels — they call it in more esoteric terms wheel separation; we call them flying truck wheels — to other types of accidents, everything from cars running into the back of trucks to other problems being caused where the motoring public has been put in danger.

What we need to do is recognize what the problem is. That's part of the problem I have in this debate. It seems to me that, first of all, the government, the Minister of Transportation, is trying to approach this problem from a fairly interesting perspective. They are trying to make this out to be some sort of simple problem that could be cured by putting large fines on people who do things wrong or by introducing some magical piece of legislation where all of a sudden, waking up the day after royal assent, the problem would have gone away.

It's not as simple as that. There are a whole host of issues that have to be addressed within the trucking industry in order to make the industry as safe as it can be for the travelling, motoring public.

I think the first thing we have to do is change the culture. One of the things we have to do within the transportation industry, and also within the general public, I would add, is to say we need to change the culture of how we deal with the trucks themselves.

It's rather ironic that not only here in Ontario but across Canada we look at trucks as being basically large cars. The reality is that trucks are not large cars. They are huge shipping containers that are running down our highways at about 120,000 pounds, barreling down the road at 90 to 100 kilometres an hour. That's a pretty dangerous vehicle to come up on. It seems to me that one of the things we need to do within the trucking industry and within the general public is to change that whole attitude and to start recognizing that trucks are not large cars, that trucks are shipping containers that weigh about 120,000 pounds and are pretty lethal when involved in an accident. If we were to change some of the attitudinal problems in our approach to the trucks themselves, I think we'd be able to get at part of this problem.

I always find it interesting that we look at rail transportation in this province from a much different perspec-

tive than we look at trucks. Could you imagine, to put it bluntly, having a rail industry or an airline industry in this country that was not properly monitored by the provincial and federal governments to make sure they are meeting certain standards when it comes to safety of maintenance? There would be a hue and cry out there. The people would say, "Why would I want to get on a plane unless I am assured that the government is assuring itself that everything is being done to make this plane safe?" Why would people embark on a train or ship goods on a train unless we knew that the government, either federally or provincially, depending on who has the authority, would assure itself that the trains themselves and the track are as safe as humanly possible within the limitations we have? Nobody.

When it comes to trucks, we have a totally different attitude. We see an 18-wheeler or we see a double trailer-truck coming down the highway and we look at it as being just another car. Well, it's not another car. It's a huge vehicle. It is a transportation vehicle that needs to be treated differently than a car. I think that's one of the first things we have to do: We have to change that attitude.

I'll give you an example, Mr Speaker. You were a member of this House under the former Peterson government, two governments ago. They looked at the whole issue within the industry itself, not just trucking. They looked at the manufacturing industry and the problems we were having in handling chemicals within the workplace. The opposition, being us, the New Democrats, and the unions who were out there trying to make the workplace safer for their members started going after the Peterson government and saying, "What we need to do when it comes to the handling of dangerous goods, chemicals within industry, is to start changing the attitude."

So the Peterson government put in place what was called the WHMIS program. You would remember, Mr Speaker, that what WHMIS did was it trained the workers, the employers and government people in making sure that everybody understood what was dangerous within the workplace and then if something God-forsaken should happen, how to deal with it. By training people and educating people, they started changing attitudes about how we handle dangerous chemicals, how we store them properly and how we transport them.

As a result of that, I would argue that over the last about 10 years now, or maybe a little bit less, that WHMIS has been in place there have been far fewer incidents where people have been injured or killed because of chemicals in the workplace. Why? Because we managed to change the attitude within the workplace. We managed to get employers, the managers in the workplace and the foremen and whoever runs the companies, to start understanding that you do not treat a container of chemicals the same way you treat a container of water, that they are not the same thing and that we need to make sure there are standards in place and we need to make sure the workers who handle the equipment understand what can be done and how it can be done safely. More importantly, we made sure we have the proper supports within the workplace both to store and to handle and transport those particular chemicals.

As a result of the change in attitude, and I give kudos to the Peterson government for this one, we managed to make a change within the whole problem that we had where we had literally hundreds of workers every month being diseased and some unfortunately killed by the handling of toxic chemicals within the workplace.

It seems to me we have to come at the shipping industry in the same way. We have to get the motoring public to understand and we need to get the industry and the shippers and the drivers and everybody to understand that trucks are not big cars. Trucks are exactly what they are: They are huge shipping vehicles. We need to make sure that we have standards in place and we need to make sure that those standards that are in place are enforceable and reasonable in making sure we make the industry as safe as possible. More importantly, we need to recognize that they are basically huge transport vehicles. I think that's one of the things you have to be able to do.

What are some of the things we can do in order to make our highways safer? What can we do in order to deal with the issue of how we make the trucking industry as safe as we can?

The broad stroke I would say is this: As well as changing the attitude and getting people to understand that trucks are not big cars, we need to start looking at how we make us as a society responsible. We all have a share in this, we all have a stake in this and we all have a responsibility. We need to make sure the government takes its responsibility in making sure that there are proper conditions, that there is proper regulation in place, that there is proper inspection and proper enforcement in place, to make sure the industry does what it can.

We also have to look at the people who produce the goods and who contract the trucking companies to ship the goods. We need to make sure the manufacturers are also held accountable, because that's part of the problem we're having today in the trucking industry. We live in a world of deregulation. We live in a world in which the trucking industry, along with a whole bunch of other industries, has been deregulated. With that deregulation came a price. Yes, it has been cheaper to ship goods, on average, for the manufacturers; no question. But has it necessarily been good for the travelling public? I would say not, because what has happened is that you have cut-rate operators who come into competition with good shippers who are trying to do their job. You have people in competition with them slashing prices, and to do so, they slash safety. What ends up happening is that they put the motoring public at risk.

One of the things we have to do, and I'm really looking forward to seeing the government's bill that is supposed to be introduced next week, is to take a look at the issue: Are we going to hold the manufacturers responsible? When a manufacturer goes out there and knowingly hires a company that he or she knows may have problems when it comes to their safety rating, will we hold them responsible? I think it is awfully unfair to hold the driver responsible, which seems to be what we are doing in this day and age. We blame the driver, and if there's any other blame to be given, we blame the trucking company. I'm not saying they are not without

some responsibility. What I am saying is that we need to look at the root of the problem. We have to make sure the trucking industry is dealt with in such a way that they can make a sufficient dollar so that we can assure ourselves that we are able to have safer trucks out on our highways, and that costs money.

1520

I guess the basic question is: Are we prepared to pay the price? I think most people in Ontario are fairly reasonable. I think most people are prepared to say, "I would put safety over the cheaper price of shipping." I want to make sure when I drive down the 401 or I go up Highway 11 that I'm not going to meet some 18-wheeler or some 53-foot truck or some double-axle truck on the highway that's unsafe, that just might come apart as I'm going by it or it's coming by me. That's the first thing we need to do.

What's happened up to now to deal with this problem? It's been interesting what has happened over the past two years. I watched the Minister of Transportation get up with great fanfare on a number of occasions to announce measures to deal with the issue of truck safety, but up to now they've just been announcements. We haven't seen anything concrete on the part of the government in bringing forward actual legislation that it is prepared to carry through this House to deal with the broad issues of truck safety.

We've seen the government come in here, the Minister of Transportation, and announce with great fanfare last January, I guess it was, Bill 125. That was a bill that was going to give absolute fines of \$50,000. When truck wheels come flying off trucks, we would fine the trucking company and the driver 50,000 bucks for the wheel coming off.

I'm not so sure that's a good idea, to be quite honest. I think there are other ways of coming at the responsibility. But the point is, he introduced that legislation knowing that it was never going to get called to the House, and we caught him on that one. Members of the opposition, both the New Democrats and the Liberals, caught the Minister of Transportation at his own game. Nobody was listening to us at the beginning when we pointed that out.

I remember that Al Palladini came to this House and introduced legislation called Bill 125 with great fanfare, great press opportunities, wonderful photo ops, great articles in the Toronto Star, the Toronto Sun, the Globe and Mail, Global television, City-TV and all the others. It was a great announcement. He was going to finally do something. But he knew he didn't have the support of his House leader.

The Minister of Transportation knew that the House leader had told him: "Don't introduce this bill because I have no intention of calling it, because we have other legislation we want to deal with as the Mike Harris government. We want to deal with the megacity." They wanted to deal with the consolidation of school boards. They wanted to deal with the assessment of taxes in the municipality of Toronto and what will be the greater city of Toronto. They had other things that they wanted to deal with and the minister introduced legislation to the House in order to get a photo op and make it look as if he's doing something.

I understand the pressure put on the minister. I don't want to attack the Minister of Transportation outright because he has done some good things. But I think it's fairly cynical when a government comes in and introduces a bill that it knows will never be called to the House. It's quite interesting where we find ourselves today some three to four months later. The bill has never been called to the — well, it's been called to the House but we haven't finished —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): There was a big fund-raiser in Toronto.

Mr Bisson: I was getting to that point in a second. The point is that this bill has been before this House since January and has yet to be passed into law. I would just say, number one, the Minister of Transportation introduced the legislation knowing that he wasn't going to deal with it and, number two, the minister really had no intention — I guess the first point is the same as the second. It was good for going out to fund-raisers. The Minister of Transportation can deal with people at fund-raisers fairly well, but when it comes to this legislation he certainly had problems.

He has done some things that I've got to say are a step in the right direction. One of the things that the Minister of Transportation did was carry on some work that was started by my colleague Mr Pouliot when he was the Minister of Transportation, and that's the issue of safety ratings. I think that's a very important first step. What we need to do, and we did this through the legislation and I understand it might even be fixed up a little bit better in future legislation, is say that we will make a safety rating system whereby anybody in Ontario who has doubts about a particular shipper is able to call up and find out if that shipper is within a particular parameter when it comes to safety. If they're not, automatically they would be pulled off the road. I think that's not a bad way to do it.

I'll tell you, I'm not a big fan of fines. I don't think fining trucking companies in the end is the entire answer. I think there might be the odd exception where you need to do that, where you've got a really bad operator such as we've seen in the past. I forget the name of the company offhand, but there was one particular company in the city of Toronto there for a couple of years that had been having a pretty rotten record. There might be cases where the minister has to move on that because nothing else seems to work. But I think in most cases the best thing we can do is to turn around and say: "Listen, you have to be able to operate your company within a certain rating when it comes to safety and if you don't do so, you ain't going to have a licence. You're not going to be able to ship in Ontario."

If we go the next step, if we follow that safety rating system, we assure ourselves that shippers who ship with these companies have some sort of — there should be some sort of financial incentive so that the companies that are the safest have some sort of preferential treatment with the Ministry of Transportation, maybe cheaper licences. I know some of this stuff is being talked about in Target '97, but take a look at how we reward those transport companies who are out there doing the thing right and whose rating systems are impeccable. We

should be making it economically better for them, so that shippers out there use them rather than the people that are more unsafe. We should have a competition to make the system better and have safer trucks rather than having the competition as it is now, where the people who have the worst safety records are the ones with the cheapest shipping prices.

I was talking to one shipping company out of Oshawa a couple of months ago. We were having a chat about the rates to ship goods from the city of Toronto to Montreal. What's interesting to note here is that those bad shippers the ones that are out there with the trucks that are not in very good shape, that try to plan their runs so they don't run across any Ministry of Transportation inspectors or the OPP, are the ones that are really cutting the price. They're doing the shipping from Toronto to Montreal at about one third less than what is being charged by other shipping companies. That's what's happening in the market and that's the problem. We need to assure ourselves that the reputable operators out there are not undercut by operators who are operating unsafely, and that's what we need to get to. I don't argue to regulate in that way — I think we can do that in other ways — but I think what we need to do is have a carrot-and-stick approach, being able to put the carrot out there rather than just whacking them over the head when they do something wrong.

What are some of the things we need to deal with? We need to look at all the aspects when it comes to shipping. Let's start from the beginning. When it comes to the manufacturing of trailers, we need to assure ourselves that the manufacturers are building trailers to a sufficient standard and that the parts being used to build these trailers are also sufficient. One of the things that I found in talking to operators out there is that some of the replacement parts, and even in some cases some of the parts used in the manufacturing, are substandard and are not of the quality they used to be some years ago. If we're seeing wheels flying off trucks, rolling off highways and killing people, part of the reason, from what I understand from talking to people in the industry, is that some of the replacement parts that we're using are not of the same quality as they used to be. In order to cut price, in order to be more competitive, they've weakened the materials being used, which has made the equipment — the hubs on wheels and others — a lot less sturdy than it used to be before.

We need to look at that particular issue. We need to take a look at how we assure ourselves that trailers being produced meet a certain standard and, once they are repaired, that the parts being used in the replacement of the defective parts are to a sufficient standard as well. Whatever we do in legislation or by way of regulation, I think we need to take a look at that issue.

I'll tell you, talking to people who run pulp and paper trucks up Highway 11, it's a big — I was coming down the highway about two, three weeks ago and one guy lost two wheels and was off on the side of the road. The highway was blocked for about an hour and a half until they were able to tow everything out of the way because of the way the truck ended up stopping. Luckily, nobody was hurt and there was no big accident.

One of the things that ends up happening is that this was a brand-new truck. This was a trailer that had been purchased I think it was in Orillia. I'm not quite sure where it came from — I'd have to go back and look at my notes — but it was somewhere in southern Ontario. This particular trailer had just been purchased about a month ago and here it is, it had lost two wheels. There's something wrong here. The guy — I don't blame him — was mad as heck. He was saying: "I spent all this money, I spent over \$100,000 to buy this trailer, and here I am driving from Timmins to Smooth Rock Falls with a load of chips and two wheels come flying off. What's wrong here?"

That tells me that part of the problem is we need to assure ourselves the manufacturers are living up to a standard when it comes to building these. This particular owner also told me he's had problems with replacement parts. Some of those parts have not been up to standard. We need to protect the owners of the rigs. I see the parliamentary assistant shaking his head in the negative. Oh, it's not you, the parliamentary assistant? You are anyway. That is part of the problem. We need to assure ourselves that when the trucking operator goes out there to buy a truck, he or she is getting something that is of quality and not something that's going to fall apart and endanger the public. I think that's one of the issues we need to be able to deal with. I understand and I accept that it is easier said than done, but I think we need to move in that direction. We need to be able to protect the people who are going out there purchasing the rigs and make sure they are safe.

1530

One of the other things you have to do also is to assure yourself that when maintenance is being done, the maintenance is being done in such a way that it is up to standard. One of the things that strikes me as interesting is that the Ministry of Transportation — here's how it works. I own a fleet of trucks. Let's say I'm shipping lumber chips from Timmins up to Smooth Rock Falls. I have four or five trucks and I have a garage in order to take care of them. The Ministry of Transportation will give me the ability to inspect my own trucks. That might be okay in some cases, but I can certainly tell you, in other cases it ain't a good idea. When the operator is the same person who does the maintenance, there may be some economic benefit to it, but unless it's properly monitored, you can start having some problems in the long run.

If we're going to give the owners that ability to do their own inspections, we have to assure ourselves that the Ministry of Transportation is going in there and making sure that those shops are properly licensed, properly equipped and in fact are doing the work they should be doing to make those trucks safe.

Again, I want to preface, a lot of the operators are doing this quite well. I look at some of the companies out there like Manitoulin and others. They certainly have some credibility when it comes to this area. But with some of the smaller operators, it's a problem. What we need to do is to make sure that the ministry properly inspects those garages and that the work being done on them is actually being done and is being done by certified people.

I was talking to the fellow up in my riding from the Ministry of Transportation who is responsible for that. Given the amount of time he has, being one person, he's lucky to inspect all of these, to get to each one of these garages once a year. That means in a lot of cases these trucks might be being repaired, but they might be repaired badly and the ministry doesn't find out about it for a couple of years, unless they happen to catch you at a roadside inspection.

I think we need to go back to the beginning. We have to say at the beginning, "Let us assure ourselves that the people who are fixing the trucks are doing so and are doing so well." That's making sure that we have qualified mechanics, that we have quality parts and we have good maintenance programs to keep those trucks up to standard.

One of the things we can do that would be really easy — and I'm not going to get into the whole issue of lick-and-stick stickers. I think most people understand what's happening out there. In some cases an operator goes out there, again, sometimes with the smaller ones, and says, "Jeez, I've got to get my rig out on to the road." He gets himself a sticker from a mechanic — that's why they call it a lick-and-stick; it hasn't even been inspected — plop on the tractor-trailer it goes and down the highway goes the truck. In fact, the thing has never really been inspected.

One of the things I'm going to ask the government to do in their legislation would be really simple. If you look at how they deal with maintenance on trains, the actual maintenance log of the train car itself is kept on the car, so when the ministry inspectors federally go and take a look at that particular shipment or container, they can pull out the maintenance log. It's against the law not to have it there. They can pull out the maintenance log. They know who's worked on it, when it was worked on, who did what, what was replaced, when it was done, what were the parts used. It's a very non-bureaucratic way of doing it, and if there is any problem, immediately they can tell if something has gone wrong, if something has not been properly done.

Why don't we take the same approach when we deal with trucks? When it comes to trucks, rather than trying to figure out, "Is this an actual valid sticker? Has the maintenance really been done? Shall I call the shop? Can you find the mechanic? Has it been done?" why don't we put the maintenance logs right on the trailer? That way, when the Ministry of Transportation pulls it over off the road, the Ministry of Transportation inspector or the OPP officer can pull the maintenance log out of the pouch that's on the trailer and say, "Indeed this trailer has been properly maintained."

That's part of the problem we have, because a lot of people don't recognize that the owner-operator of the truck often doesn't even know what trailer he's going to be pulling the next day, or she if it happens to be a female driver. The guy takes his rig, he drives down to the yard, he's assigned a trailer and he pulls that trailer from Windsor to Toronto or from Toronto to Montreal or Toronto to Timmins. Often you're not pulling the same trailers, and the truck operator has no way of knowing if the maintenance has been properly done, other than doing

a walkabout around the truck and doing the inspection, which I'll get to a little bit later. But one thing that could be done really easily is, I could walk up to the truck, as the driver, I could pick up the log and find out, "Has this thing ever been maintained?" and if it has not been maintained, I don't take it. That's one of the things you can do.

You can increase the frequency when it comes to maintenance. That's something that's already happening now. It wouldn't cost any money. With the reputable shippers out there, they don't just maintain their trailers once a year. You've got people out there who understand that if you maintain vehicles properly, both the rigs and the trailers, and you do it on a frequent basis, every three months or so, and in cases of trucks a little bit more frequently, it's cheaper when it comes to costs because you're not letting things break down. You're better off to fix it before it becomes a huge problem.

One of the things we can look at is increasing the frequency of actual maintenance inspections on the part of mechanics to the rigs and to the trucks themselves. If we were to post that within the maintenance log that I talked about putting on the trailer, we'd have a way of assuring ourselves that that's actually been done. That's one of the things we can do and it wouldn't cost a lot of money. That's one of the things we need to say here. That's one of the things we can do in order to try to make the trucks a little bit safer on the highway.

One of the other things we can do is make sure that we properly train truck drivers to do the inspections. Again, some truck drivers, and I would argue probably a majority, have been in the industry for a long time and know their job and try to do it well. But one of the problems I'm told by truck drivers is that often the fellow or the company who owns the truck is more interested in seeing that thing drive down the highway than he is in seeing the guy walk around the truck to do the inspection. There's a quick runabout in the middle of the night with a flashlight; he jumps in the truck and down the highway he goes. But if we were to take the time and make sure that proper pre-trip inspections were done — and we can put that in legislation — and number two, if we properly trained drivers to be able to do those trip inspections, we would be able to get at part of the problem. Again, it won't fix all of the problem, but there are little bits and pieces that add up to being able to reduce a lot of the problems we have with flying truck wheels and other things within the industry.

I understand part of this is going to be responded to by the bill from the Minister of Transportation, and I look forward to seeing that bill. If that's in there, I think that's a good idea. But one of the things we can do is assure ourselves that, number one, the truck drivers are properly trained when it comes to doing the trip inspections. I'm not saying, "I'm ABC Trucking and I'm going to train my own employees." No, no, that's not good enough. What you have to do is to make sure that the truck drivers are properly trained by certified trainers and not just by the owner-operators themselves. We need to make sure that's done properly.

The other thing we need to do is to look at a graduated driver's licence system for trucks. That's not a bad idea.

It has been done with vehicles. My eldest daughter when she turned 16, and my youngest one when she turned 16, had to go through a graduated system to get their licence. Again, that's not a bad idea. We should be doing that with truck drivers.

I was standing at Malette waferboard the other day, talking to the drivers who were coming into the plant to pick up loads. They were bringing them pretty well anywhere in Ontario and the northern United States. That's one of the things some of the drivers were saying, that some of the jockeys they've got coming in behind some of these wheels have been in the business for not a long time and they think the faster you go, the more money you're going to make. Well, not necessarily so. The faster you go the more wear and tear you're going to put on your truck, because the conditions of our highways are such that it's the shaking and the vibrating and the bumping you get on the truck that eventually makes wheels fly off trucks.

One of the things we need to do is to make sure that we properly train drivers when it comes to driving. We should first, at the very least, have a graduated driver's licence system for truck operators. Then one of the other things we should do is make sure there are mandatory driving schools that are certified.

I know this is a big leap for a lot of people, and even some truck drivers may have some problems with it, but I think you have to start changing the attitude within the trucking industry. You've got to start saying to them, "Listen, these are not big cars; these are huge transportation vehicles that weigh 120,000 pounds that are rolling down the highway at 90 kilometres, 110 kilometres an hour," and if you hit one, God forbid, you're not going to survive.

We certainly take our time to properly regulate the airline industry, we do it within the rail industry, and we should do so within the trucking industry. In the end, who is left better? First of all, the public ends up with a safer industry as far as what it means to our highways and what it means to motorists, but it makes it easier for drivers and it also makes it easier in some ways for the industry itself. At the very least, we should be able to look at how we put in place mandatory truck driver programs where the truck drivers have to go through a licensed school or whatever it might be to be able to get their licence, and then they get their licence on a graduated system.

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You can't put that in all of a sudden, I understand that — you'd have to grandfather those people who are there now — but certainly you can start working towards that in the future. That's something that wouldn't cost the government a lot of money that in the end would make it better for everybody around — the shipper, because if the shipper has a good driver, he makes money, and a good driver is not driving down at 120 kilometres an hour; it's the driver who does proper trip inspections, drives his rig with care, drives it within the speed limits and doesn't do things he shouldn't be doing when it comes to driving those trucks, and recognizes when there's a problem, pulls over and gets it fixed and doesn't wait until a truck wheel flies off. Unfortunately, people get killed by that, and there's no nice way of putting it.

The other thing we need to do with drivers on the preventive maintenance programs that I talked about a little while ago is to certify that. It's not good enough to say, "You're a truck driver; let me walk you around the truck and show you how you inspect a huge 120,000-pound rig worth \$100,000," and walk around the truck a couple of times with the driver. We need to make sure that drivers are given the proper skills. These are complex pieces of equipment that cost a lot of money and endanger people's lives if they're not properly inspected, so we need to make sure those preventive maintenance programs are put in place, and we should be doing that in a formal way to make sure the drivers understand that.

The other thing we should be doing when it comes to the maintenance side of it is looking at inspection and maintenance standards. We should be making sure the maintenance standards, when it comes to inspecting vehicles, of the drivers and the mechanics are at a level that responds to the safety issues and safety concerns that have been raised up to now. Those are some of the things we can do that don't cost a lot of money that would be able to deal effectively with how we assure ourselves that the people in the trucking industry are doing a good job.

One of the other things I think we need to do is to protect drivers from the owners in some cases. It amazes me that in Ontario — Mr Speaker, you won't know this, because I don't think a lot of people do — we allow our truck drivers to drive longer than in any other jurisdiction. We allow our drivers to get on the road for 13 hours, where in the United States and other areas we say 10 hours is the maximum the driver can drive.

I want to ask you a question: How would you feel sitting in the back of a Dash-8 flying up to Timmins or in a 747 flying to Paris, France, with a pilot who has been flying for 13 hours? How would you feel? Not too safe. I think one of the things we have to do is —

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): They fly 14 hours all the time to the Middle East.

Mr Bisson: Yes, but they're crews; they're not alone in the truck, Margaret. They don't sit and all of a sudden fly the plane alone for 14 hours. They've got autopilot; they've got computers; they've got a co-pilot. They've got somebody else in the cockpit with them.

The point I'm making is that in any other industry we make sure the people who are operating the equipment are properly supported both technically and when it comes to hours of work. One of the things we have to do is look at the issue of hours of work for drivers, and one of the things I'm not convinced the government is going to do in the bill that is coming up is to look at that issue.

I don't pretend to have the magic answer. All I know is that when I talk to truck drivers out there, there's a pretty sorry story to be told about drivers having to run fairly long distances, for many hours, in order to try to make a buck. Why? Because they're paid by the kilometre. It's a pretty simple thing.

I have one fellow I'll tell you about. Here's one guy's run up in my area. He would get up at 3 o'clock on Monday morning, drive his car up to my friend's riding just south of Hearst, pick up a truck, drive it all the way down to Michigan — that was his first day of work — have a sleep in the truck, pick up a load and drive it all

the way back up north. That first drive alone was somewhere in the neighbourhood of 22 hours. It's nuts. The rules allow us to do that. We say you can't work more than 13 hours consecutively, but if you stagger the hours of work in such a way, you're able to get away with driving more than the 13 hours.

One of the things we have to assure ourselves of is that we protect drivers. We need to make sure the drivers are properly protected when it comes to hours of work. We need to make sure that the employer, being the owner of the truck at this point, doesn't take advantage of the drivers in making them drive longer than they should. We need to look at that issue.

One of the things we need to look at in addition to that — this is a fairly controversial one — is the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Why is it that in Ontario a truck driver who knows there is an unsafe condition with his truck cannot refuse to work? If I work at the mine in Timmins or Margaret works at a manufacturing plant in Mississauga and there is unsafe work, we could refuse under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. That's the law. Any employer who tries to make Margaret work in that plant or me work in the mine, and we know there's an unsafe condition, will be charged under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's the member for Mississauga South.

Mr Bisson: The member for Mississauga South works in Mississauga, I would take it, and you would work somewhere up in your area, sir, if you've ever had the opportunity to work with your hands.

The point I make is simply this: In the modern industrial world, if there is an unsafe condition at work and a worker refuses to work, he or she is protected by the Occupational Health and Safety Act; in Ontario, when it comes to the trucking industry, we're not. There are cases out there, and there are drivers who have talked to me and I am sure there are drivers who have talked to you in your travels, because I see some of you in the members' galleries over here who unfortunately are victims, who know people who have died on highways, and in a lot of cases the truckers are knowingly driving trucks in an unsafe condition. Why? Not because they want to. It's called economic terrorism. He's told by his employer, "If you don't drive that truck, out; I'm going to get somebody else to drive it," and all the driver knows is, "Jeez, I've got bills to pay, my mortgage is behind by a month, my kid needs braces," whatever the financial pressures are at home, and he ends up having to drive that truck in an unsafe condition.

We should be protecting the driver. We should be saying that the truck is a place of work. Yes, it might be moving around the highways of Ontario and North America, but none the less it's the place of work. When the pilot or the mechanic or the baggage carrier at the airport sees a defect on an aircraft, they have the right to ground the darned thing. If the baggage carrier working for Air Canada, loading a DC-9 or whatever aircraft it is, sees something that's unsafe, all the baggage carrier has to do — that's not even the mechanic; this is the best part — is report the unsafe condition. What happens? Boom, a mechanic comes and fixes it. If not, Air Canada

would get charged, rightfully so. In our industry when it comes to trucking: "Oh, no, these are big cars. These aren't transportation; they're big cars. It's okay. You can go down with a couple of loose bolts. Nobody is going to get hurt." Unfortunately too many people have been hurt or killed because of that attitude.

What we need to do is protect the truck drivers, in some cases, from the bad operators and say, "This is a workplace, and if you see something that is unsafe, you have the right to refuse to work and nobody can force you to drive that truck if it's unsafe." I've been told too many times by too many drivers, "Gilles, the problem is that I sometimes know it's unsafe but I ain't going to have a job tomorrow morning if I push it any more." That's something we need to deal with. We've got to stop kidding ourselves. We've got to stop looking at this problem as if there is one magic solution, that increasing a fine or doing whatever is going to fix it, because that's not it. It's a combination of things, and the right to refuse unsafe work for truck drivers is one issue we would be able to do.

That's nothing revolutionary, by the way. Everybody else has the right. Your workers in your office have that right. If they're in your constituency office and they see something unsafe in the office, they have the right to refuse work. But we say to a truck driver who is pulling a 120,000-pound rig, "You haven't got the right to refuse work if it's unsafe."

I think there's something wrong in this province. We need to deal with some of that. We need to be able to come clean as a Legislature and as members. We have to stop playing politics with the issue of truck safety and we have to start dealing with the real issues.

That brings me to another issue for another debate, but at some time we've got to start changing the rules in this Legislature to make it work for the people so that when we raise issues like this, it's not partisanship that comes into play but it's actually dealing with the problem. We need to look at parliamentary reform, but that's for another time. That's for another day.

We need to take a look at this from various aspects. So far I've talked about how you can deal with this by making sure there is proper maintenance done by qualified people, making sure the Ministry of Transportation is inspecting those shops and making sure that proper work is being done by qualified people, and if not, boom, they lose their certification rights. We need to assure ourselves that the drivers themselves are properly trained when it comes to not only being able to drive the truck but also being able to do their trip inspections, and that this be done by properly training them through certified schools and not doing that just with on-the-job training. It is a very technical industry.

1550

One of the issues here that has to be raised I just found out about today, as a matter of fact. I was talking to my colleague the member for Cochrane North, Len Wood. He met with how many, about 70 drivers?

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): About 200.

Mr Bisson: About 200 drivers up in the Hearst area. For those people who may not know this, up in the Hearst area the language spoken is French; 90% of the

people up in Hearst don't speak English — I don't think that would be stretching it too much — or sufficient English to get by. The new standard set for replacing wheels is that if you're going to change the wheels, you have to be properly trained in order to do so. It's done entirely in English. There is no way for francophone mechanics or francophone drivers, whoever happens to be doing it, to get that training in their own language.

One of the issues I certainly want to talk to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Education and Training about is making sure that we respect the linguistic reality of the province and make sure we're not putting people in the position of committing safety infractions by virtue of sending somebody to a program and they don't understand the language. We need to make sure we provide French training for those people who are taking the program so they understand what's going on.

Potentially what could happen is that we send somebody to one of these courses and the person could pass and never understand a word that was said. What does that mean to the public? I'll raise that again. I'll raise that at another time. It's something we need to do.

The other thing we need to do is take a look at the whole issue we talked about when it came to training drivers; we need to take a look at driving schools themselves. We need to make sure that what we have are accredited driving schools; that they're people who have been checked out by the ministry, they're people we know are doing a good job, are training the drivers properly. We need to ensure that when we're training our drivers we're doing that in schools put in place for that.

One of the other things we need to do in this — and I just touched on it at the beginning, and I think that's the other part of the puzzle — is take a look at the whole rating issue. Yes, the government — and we need to acknowledge it; when the government does something right, I think we need to acknowledge it — like I said earlier, moved forward on something that was being started by the Minister of Transportation in the previous government, the member for Lake Nipigon. We moved into a commercial vehicle operator's registration system that is a little bit more accountable. I think we need to look at what has been done, because I'm not convinced from the work the government has done that we've really covered that one off well.

We need to take a look at ensuring that the information available to the public is there. I know in just trying to check up — I was trying to check on the CVOR for a couple of companies — you're not able to get all the information that's really needed to assure yourself that indeed this particular company is actually as safe as we believe it is. We have to assure ourselves, when it comes to the ratings, that the ratings indeed reflect what we see within the company itself. More importantly, we have to make sure it's transparent. We have to make sure the public is able to get the information necessary to assure themselves that those particular trucks are safe.

I'm just going to wrap up in the few minutes I have left and bring it down to this: What we've got going on right now is that we have a situation in Ontario where over the years we've been seeing fairly alarming statistics

in truck safety. Why? I think one of the reasons the industry has become quite unsafe is because we've moved from a regulated environment some years ago to an almost totally unregulated system today. I've got to say we told you so. We in the NDP have been telling you for years that if you move to an unregulated system, there's going to be a cost when it comes to safety.

Now we're in an unregulated system where, quite frankly, we don't have the kinds of assurances on standards and we don't have a way of ensuring that indeed what's happening within the industry is being done properly in order to assure the motoring public that what's happening in the industry is being done in a safe way.

I don't advocate that we completely reregulate the industry. Ontario could not do that on its own. But I think people need to understand that the deregulation that's happened has not only been here in Ontario; it has been across Canada. I don't think we as a provincial Legislature can deal adequately with the regulation issue. But as a provincial Legislature we can do certain things when it comes to what happens within our borders to assure ourselves that drivers are properly trained; that where they're trained, there are properly accredited schools; that trip inspections are done and are done in a way that makes some sense, that would make sure that when the person is trained it's done, again, by an accredited facility.

We also have to assure ourselves, when it comes to hours of work, that we deal with that in some adequate way. We need to make sure drivers are not driving on the roads far longer than they need to be. We need to make sure that when the driver is behind the wheel he or she is rested, is alert and is able to drive that rig in a safe way. I ain't convinced that's happening.

I drive up Highway 11 from Toronto to Timmins and back about every second week starting this time of the year. I pull into the truck stops, and you really wonder sometimes. Some of the people who come crawling out of those rigs are pretty tired. I don't blame the truck drivers for that. I understand what's going on. We need to take a look at why that's happening.

One of the other things we need to do is make sure we have a good vehicle safety rating system to assure ourselves that things are happening in a way that makes some sense.

The last comment I would make, and then I'd leave the time on the clock for anybody else in our caucus who would like to speak on this particular issue, is to recognize also where we're at. We've got the Minister of Transportation, who introduced Bill 125 last January. Why did he do that? He did it because there has been a demand on the part of the public for the government to do something, for a very good reason: There are people dying on our highways.

I'm very cynical about how this has been dealt with up to now. The Minister of Transportation came into this House, introduced Bill 125 and said, "We need to have this passed right away," knowing that the House leader for his party was never going to call that legislation forward. He then tried to say it was all the opposition's fault.

We've offered time and time again — me and my House leader, Bud Wildman, and the House leader for the Liberal caucus, Mr Bradley — have offered how many times now? We've offered unanimous consent to pass that bill in one day at least six times now, and the government refuses to do so.

I've got some problems with Bill 125, I understand there are some problems with it, but if the government thought it fit to be introduced into the House to deal with the problem, at least it would have been a step in the right direction. It may not have caught all of the problems in the industry, but at least it would have been a step forward. I'm cynical about a government and a minister that knowingly do that and know the bill is never going to be called forward.

Where does it leave us? I suspect next week some time the government is actually going to call forward the truck safety bill. Why? I guess the Minister of Transportation can take some credit here. He actually tried to pull the wool over our eyes and we kept him accountable. The opposition kept on pushing him and pushing him for the legislation until finally the government said: "We've got to do something. Al, go back and get your bill done and get it back in here."

The one thing that I didn't say and that I almost forgot — and this has to be said, because this is the biggest problem with the process up to now — is that in preparing this bill that's coming forward before us this spring, the comprehensive truck safety legislation the government talks about, it did so how? It prepared that bill based on a report called Target '97. The Target '97 report has been written by whom? It has been written by the Ministry of Transportation and the trucking industry.

I don't say they don't have a stake. Of course the trucking industry has a stake in what happens in trucking legislation, and the Ministry of Transportation sure does. But have any of you been called? Have any of the public, any of the victims, any of the families of the victims been called when it comes to what's happening within the Target '97 process? Have any of the groups like CRASH been called? Not one. Nobody has been called before this committee to give their ideas about how you can make good truck safety legislation.

That's what we're going to be watching for in this legislation that's coming before us now. We're going to be looking at what's in that legislation. Is the legislation just what the Ontario Trucking Association wanted or is it stuff that makes some sense to make our highways safer for the people?

I say to the Minister of Transportation, who is looking through his notes now, I presume, to find out if CRASH had been consulted — I can tell you they weren't —

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): No need.

Mr Bisson: No need? No need to be consulted? Minister, they're the only group that was out there looking at the issues of truck safety in the province and you're saying they don't need to be consulted? Come on. What's the matter with you? I don't believe this guy. All I expected the minister to say is, "Of course, in the future we'll make sure CRASH is involved." He stands there and says they don't have to be consulted. Minister, you

have to understand something: There is nobody out there except for the victims' families who are advocating — what are you saying?

Hon Mr Palladini: You did nothing while you were in government, absolutely nothing. You should be ashamed.

1600

Mr Bisson: What a bunch. Come on, you know better than that. You know what has happened within a number of years when it comes to truck safety. We're here because of the problems of truck deregulation and we're trying to fix the problems some years later.

Let me get back to the point. I've only got four minutes. I want to say this: Minister, you have to assure yourself that in the next round, as you bring this legislation before this House, you find a way to consult with the public out there. You need to make sure there are proper public hearings on the bill when it comes forward, you give the families of the victims the opportunity to comment, you make sure that indeed people like CRASH are called before it to comment on the bill.

Hon Mr Palladini: You talked a lot. You initiated zero.

Mr Bisson: More important, you've got to stop yelling at people and start listening to people for a change. I wish the minister would do a little more listening and a little less heckling. Maybe you'd be doing all right.

Hon Mr Palladini: Listen to who's calling me a heckler. You heckle a lot.

Mr Bisson: Hey, I hardly heckle in this place any more. I've really cut back lately. Ask my friend over here; she can hear now.

I see there are people from Kapuskasing, St Pat's school. Hello. How are you doing up there? We get an opportunity to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order.

Mr Bisson: Oh, Speaker, come on.

Mr Len Wood: They're nice people.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): They came all the way from Kapuskasing.

The Acting Speaker: There are a lot of good people in Kapuskasing, but I don't think it's proper for you to entice them into doing something that is not right. I'll bring you to order and I'll not warn you again about that.

Mr Bisson: We just learned that it is against the law to wave in the province of Ontario. That's a terrible thing. We should learn how to wave goodbye to the government as it's booted out of office.

I just want to say, in the minutes I have left, that we need to come at this problem from a comprehensive position. I'm looking forward to seeing where the government's going to be when it comes to the legislation it brings forward. Minister, I hope you address a whole bunch of issues that I've had the opportunity to speak to. I hope you take a look at making sure the legislation looks at this from a comprehensive point of view and that you don't just try to window-dress your way around these problems. Thank you very much for the opportunity to debate.

Hon Mr Palladini: I of course will be opposing the opposition's resolution, because it would have the public believe that this government has not acted on road safety,

which is completely false. I'm pleased to have an opportunity to present some of the facts on this.

From our very first cabinet meeting in July 1995, when we fulfilled our campaign promise to scrap photo-radar, an NDP cash grab — that's all it was, an NDP cash grab — we have been acting on road safety where the need is the greatest. I might add that the Liberal Party also claimed to oppose photo-radar but never came out and said whether they would scrap it. They just sat on the fence, as they usually do.

When we scrapped photo-radar, we were told to come back in 90 days — those were my instructions, to come back in 90 days — with a comprehensive road safety plan that would effectively address all road safety issues, not just collect money from speeders. We fulfilled our commitment, coming back in October 1995 with a plan containing 100 initiatives.

I would just like to share with the people of Ontario what some of these initiatives were:

Alternative treatment for senior drivers, so they could have group counselling sessions to make them aware of the risks we all face as we get older.

The OPP Highway Rangers, who have been out focusing on all dangerous driving behaviour, such as speeding and aggressive driving.

Ninety-day automatic licence suspensions for impaired drivers. It's sad that I must report that as of today 10,416 drunk drivers have been taken off the road for at least 90 days.

Maintaining RIDE funding so our police officers can be out there catching impaired drivers.

Removal of seatbelt exemptions.

Legislation to allow us to give demerit points for commercial vehicle offences.

Legislation for the carrier safety rating system, which the NDP was urged to do by the industry and our party when it was in government and something we ended up doing as a government in Target '97. We did it. You guys had the chance to do it and you didn't do it.

Higher fines for commercial vehicle safety offences. They were saying we need higher fines and this government acted on that: We raised the fines up to \$20,000, the highest in Canada.

The Avion system, that allows safe operators to bypass inspection stations, freeing up our staff to focus on the bad apples.

A mobile truck inspection station, so trucks cannot take the back roads to evade a blitz or inspection station — and more of those are coming.

Here's another one: enforcing the axle weight limit. The Liberals had the opportunity; they had the legislation in place. Did they enforce it? No. They kept allowing truckers, aggregate haulers, to load up those trucks, chewing up our roads. The NDP came into power. They had the same opportunity. Did they stop that? Did they enforce that legislation? No. They allowed them to do the same thing.

These are just some of the things we have done as a government, and I'm very proud of what we have done. But the most important thing — there are some other things I will talk about — is that we will continue to do the right things to make sure Ontario's roads are the

safest on the continent. As members know, we are working on those other initiatives.

The Liberal and NDP record — I think I've touched on a couple of things, but what did they really do while they were in government? Well, I'll tell you. The NDP cut 100 truck safety inspectors while they were in office. They actually cut people who were enforcing our roads. They cut 100 safety inspectors. They allowed the out-of-service rate that they inherited from the Liberals to go from 33% to 43% and did absolutely nothing.

In 1995 the member for York Mills urged the transportation minister then, Mike Farnan, to implement a safety rating system. Did they do it? Of course not, just as their whole record shows they did nothing while they were in power except double the debt. That's what they managed to do very well, spending more money. That they did. We have already passed legislation on that, something they failed to do.

I've already said something about my good friends on the Liberal side. They had an opportunity in 1989 to really do something good, not only in the best interests of safety but also to actually make sure our roads would not be further abused. You guys had a chance to enforce that legislation on the aggregates and you didn't do it. You let the people of Ontario down. The NDP dithered and had lots of meetings; they had all kinds of meetings, but the end result was talk.

Target '97, this government's initiative in getting groups in the province together, of which I'm very proud, is a precedent. Never before in the province's history was a group of this nature assembled in the best interests of safety on our highways. This government had the vision to pursue that opportunity and take advantage of it.

Target '97 addressed 79 recommendations. I'm very happy to say that 72 of these recommendations are going to be implemented.

1610

Mr Bradley: "Are going to be."

Hon Mr Palladini: The rest require further review or legislation, which I believe is a normal thing, a normal procedure in this chamber. Some will be addressed in the spring bill and others will be forthcoming.

We have already legislated, in place, some of the recommendations: the carrier rating system, Bill 92, requiring operators to notify the ministry of changes in their fleet size.

The Tyrrell-Worona inquest: Again, the opposition would have people believe these recommendations have not been put in place. Not true. Of the 27 recommendations that apply to MTO, we have implemented 15, partially implemented four, and Target '97 will address the others. Last November we implemented the number one recommendation of the inquest: mandatory training for wheel installers. We also implemented another key recommendation: higher fines.

The Liberal bill now would have you believe they have the answers. First of all, I really want to thank the members because I did ask for input, I did ask for their help, and certainly there have been situations where they genuinely tried to help. I understand, and I want to give my colleague the member for Windsor-Walkerville a certain amount of credit, but my colleague from Windsor

has a way about him. He would like the people to believe that this government has done nothing. He would have the people of Ontario believe that this government has done nothing. I would like to remind the member from Windsor that while his party was in government, I think that tack fits nicely, because they did nothing as well, and they can shake hands with the NDP.

Most of the Liberals' bill comes from the Target '97 process which, as I said, is something I am proud of. It is an initiative that this government had the vision to accomplish. But I want to say to the honourable members that we appreciate their pledge to cooperate and pass the spring bill. I am certainly going to rely on that and I really want to rely on that to help us get closer to that point. We look forward to taking them up on their pledge, and that's going to happen very shortly.

Some of the problems with the Liberals' proposal — I don't quite understand. They propose a new requirement for all trailers to be inspected every year. We're already doing that. This already is a requirement under regulation 611. It's in the Highway Traffic Act.

Their definition of "truck" — I know I might have a little bit of an edge on the honourable member because I did happen to sell trucks once upon a time, but he basically says 4,600 kilos for trailers only. That is very inconsistent, because the Highway Traffic Act basically states it's 4,500 kilos, so that would certainly be the wrong message. But I'm not surprised, because the Liberal flip-flops are something we've all been exposed to.

They say the absolute liability will not hold up in court, yet they have it in their own bill. I don't quite understand how they can say one thing and do something else, but again that's common for them.

They want to take the bill to hearings to discuss the absolute liability issue, something where even my Premier said, "If that's what you want, that's what we're going to give you." You had a window of opportunity to bring in that wheel separation bill. You shut the door in our face.

All we wanted to do from day one was to make sure that Ontario's roads are safe. I asked my critics for their help. I must say they were being genuine when they said they would, but obviously their House leaders had different intentions.

We are going to proceed with the wheel separation bill as part of my —

The Acting Speaker: Order. The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines on a point of privilege.

Mr Bradley: I know the member would not want to mislead the House. He's not the kind of person who would want to mislead the House or anybody else. But if he were to say that the opposition tried in any way to block this legislation from going through, that's exactly what he would be doing, so I want to give him an opportunity to clarify that.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On the same point, Mr Speaker —

The Acting Speaker: No. I'm not going to debate it.

Mr Wildman: Well, Mr Speaker, unfortunately he's objecting to things that —

The Acting Speaker: Would the member for Algoma please come to order.

Mr Wildman: The minister who was speaking referred to me. I have a right to speak as a point of privilege.

The Acting Speaker: Would the member for Algoma please bring himself to order.

Mr Wildman: I am now in order. I have a point of privilege. You have to hear a point of privilege.

The Acting Speaker: Please take your seat for a moment. I want to address my comments to the member for St Catharines. It is not a point of privilege.

Mr Wildman: I have a point of privilege.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Algoma on a point of privilege.

Mr Wildman: The minister stated that the opposition House leaders in some way blocked his Bill 125. That is not true. It is a complete fabrication, and I would ask him to withdraw and correct the record.

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): What about the filibuster?

Mr Wildman: The filibuster had nothing to do with it.

Hon Mr Palladini: Mr Speaker, I have no intention —

Mr Wildman: You scheduled other bills that week. You didn't schedule Bill 125. This government has never scheduled Bill 125. Give me one date when your House leader tried to schedule this bill.

The Acting Speaker: I'd like to address a comment to the member for Algoma.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please make yourself comfortable someplace else.

The member for Algoma rose on a point of privilege. I wasn't able to make the connection between his statements and what he would have thought should have been privilege. In actual fact, during his statement he was out of order. We in this House don't use language about misleading, so I would ask you to just please withdraw those remarks in connection with that.

Mr Wildman: I'm sure the minister was mistaken, he was not misleading, therefore I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for York Centre.

Hon Mr Palladini: Thank you. I have no intention of withdrawing what I said, Mr Speaker. As a matter of fact, I think they had an opportunity. We had a window, but for whatever reason, you know, they wanted hearings. This is one of the reasons why the bill wasn't going to be coming forward, because they wanted hearings. But when we agreed to give them the hearings, they wanted to introduce the bill one, two, three, without any hearings. They refused to debate the bill unless we had hearings. That was the case back in February, but obviously it's no longer the case today.

My honourable colleague Mr Sterling asked for unanimous consent to sit through midnight, and they refused. This was the opportunity you had to debate. We're willing to debate. We're willing to debate whatever you want to debate.

I am very excited about bringing the comprehensive safety bill forward, which will include —

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe the standing orders are very explicit when it comes to the question of members not misleading the House. I listened patiently and heard the ruling you gave to our House

leader a little while ago that members in this House are not allowed to mislead the rest of the members or the public when it comes to their statements. Clearly the Minister of Transportation is trying to mislead the public and the members of this House in the comments he is making, and I would ask you to get him to withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: No. You're wrong. The rule is that you cannot accuse members of misleading. That is not a point of order.

1620

Mr Bradley: Oh, but you can mislead.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the minister from York Centre.

Hon Mr Palladini: I'm very excited and anxiously awaiting the opportunity to present the comprehensive road safety bill forward. I believe that once again it will reinforce the conviction this government has had when it comes to road safety. I believe the bill we will be introducing very shortly, which will include the wheel separation bill, which will also address bus safety, will certainly make the people of Ontario feel that much safer when they are on our great highways. I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to speak.

Mr Bradley: I would like to correct some of the misimpressions that have been created by the previous speaker in regard to the chronology of events that have taken place.

First of all, if the public is out there watching, I don't know whether they're that interested in who said what when. I think what they're most interested in is: What legislation will we see coming forward, how will that legislation affect highway safety in the province, particularly as it relates to trucks, and will it be practical and reasonable and good legislation? I think that's what all of us in the House would want to see.

It's interesting that the rules of the House — you were smiling when I said this previously, Speaker, and understandably so — do not prohibit a member from misleading the House but they do prohibit a member from accusing another member of misleading the House. That is very strange indeed. That's my dilemma this afternoon: I can't accuse the Minister of Transportation of misleading the House. You would justifiably call me to order because that is specifically prohibited in the rules. However, no member is prevented from misleading the House. That is indeed strange.

Let me say that when this matter was finally brought forward by the government in late February of this year, I indicated to the government House leader — the government had a meeting of the three House leaders — that it was interesting we had never seen any reference to a bill dealing with truck safety. In other words, it was never on the government agenda. Weekly, the government House leader does his best to share with the opposition House leaders those matters that are going to come before the House, legislation that either has a bill number or legislation that's contemplated. At no time did the government ever bring forward this particular piece of legislation on that list. It clearly told me the government had no intention in the spring session of dealing with the issue of truck safety, particularly as it relates to, as we call them, the flying wheels or the flying tires.

I took advantage of the opportunity in February, after watching the press conference, because the Minister of Transportation — someone who was watching mentioned to me that they used to watch this program called the *Howdy Doody* show on television and there was a character in that called Phineas T. Bluster. When they phoned my office they said, "You know, the Minister of Transportation reminded me of the character Phineas T. Bluster." He had a press conference when there was a lot of flak about flying tires. There were two more incidents that particular week, so somebody in the minister's office said: "Let's do something about this. Let's hold a press conference. Let's throw together a bill rather quickly that shows we're interested in this."

I said to the government House leader, the Honourable David Johnson, "I think we should proceed with this legislation," and weekly at the meetings of the House leaders, I have said to the government House leader: "Will we have Bill 125? Your Minister of Transportation says he wants it passed quickly. Can we bring that forward for consideration?" Every week he would mumble something and be evasive about it and talk about the possibility, but at no time would he ever give a commitment to bring it forward, even though I, as the opposition House leader, and Bud Wildman, member for Algoma, as the third party House leader, both said: "Please bring it forward. You'll get expeditious passage of this legislation."

This is a matter on which there was some consensus. I can tell you the two opposition parties were going to vote for the bill, were going to speak in favour of the bill and were going to be supportive of it and even give credit to the government for bringing forward such an initiative. I'm always prepared to do that when I think the government is following the recommendations of the opposition and doing things which might be good for the province. I was all set to get up and give a speech in the House back in February or March or early April praising the Minister of Transportation for bringing forward the bill, but the bill didn't appear.

On February 27, 1997, just so I could put it on paper, so everybody would know it existed, I wrote the following letter to the Honourable David Johnson, government House leader:

"Dear Minister:

"The Minister of Transportation introduced legislation entitled An Act to improve road safety by making wheel detachments an offence by amending the Highway Traffic Act on Monday, February 24.

"This is a piece of legislation that we in the Liberal Party have demanded for well over a year and we are eager for you to proceed with this bill as expeditiously as possible. Unfortunately, at no time at any House leaders' meeting has this bill been placed on the agenda by the government, and no provision has been made for this legislation in the proposed legislative calendar of your government.

"In this regard, I urge you to place this bill on the order paper for debate as early as possible and to complete at least second reading before the Legislature recesses next week," because at that time it had been scheduled in February to recess the next week, in early March.

"This can be accomplished by changing the legislative schedule from this Monday, March 3. In this regard the Liberal caucus has suggested that the truck safety legislation be called on Monday instead of Bill 98, the Development Charges Act."

The Development Charges Act, as we know, is doing a favour for developers. It's putting more money back in their pockets. We thought that could wait. We disagree with it, but we know the government wants to do that. But we said, "Let's put that aside for a day; let's deal with this bill." I went on in my letter to say the following:

"It is not often that there is a consensus on the need for and general content of a piece of legislation proposed by a government. In this case, I believe such a situation exists and that the House should move forward with the processing of this legislation before the winter break, despite the fact that you have made no provision of time for this bill in your legislative plans.

"I look forward to a favourable response to this letter at your earliest convenience."

Of course, the response was that the government wasn't prepared to move forward. I was disappointed, because I kept saying at every meeting: "Can we have this legislation? You have the support of the opposition. I think you have pretty good support in Ontario for that piece of legislation." But somebody sidetracked it somewhere, somebody in the government apparatus.

Then we got into May and there was the big fundraiser in Toronto. I don't know if it has any influence on it at all. I don't know these things.

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): No.

Mr Bradley: The member for Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings says no, but there was a big fund-raiser on a Thursday night a couple of weeks ago in Toronto. The day after, they asked the Premier about the bill and he said, "Oh, I don't think we're going to bring that forward until the fall now." There was something wrong and they weren't going to move forward until the fall. I thought, I hope nobody got to the Premier at the fundraiser. I hope nobody from the trucking industry whispered in his ear that this legislation wasn't good, because I couldn't believe that could possibly influence anybody.

I was worried about that happening. My friend from Stormont was probably worried as well, because —

Mr Jordan: Imputing motives all the time.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): He thinks we think like he does. It wasn't a bunch of Liberals, Jim; it was a bunch of Tories. That's the difference.

Mr Bradley: I'm showing you the coincidence — the next day, coincidentally, they were withdrawing the legislation. They weren't going to proceed with the legislation.

I was disappointed, because I remember the enthusiasm of the Minister of Transportation at that press conference. There was all kinds of bluster, all kinds of public relations, all kinds of energy and enthusiasm. I thought, "I want to help my friend out; I want to help Al Palladini," as we know him in this House, as an individual.

I wanted to help him out, so we started to ask some questions of the government House leader and the Premier and the minister, trying to move the legislation along, because the government in effect had cut the poor Minister of Transportation off at the knees. He wanted to proceed and I knew of his enthusiasm. I could see it in his face in this Legislature that he wanted to proceed with this. The Premier and Guy Giorno and whoever else advises, not the cabinet and the others, but the people who sit in the Premier's office said, "We can't proceed with this; we've got to stop Al Palladini." I'm saying I would prefer to see it proceed.

1630

I have a notice that's come before me that says I have only a minute left to make this case, and that's most difficult, but I have to let my colleagues get involved with this as well.

I thought I had dealt with it in this way. But again, on May 12, when I saw that the minister was in trouble — I'll read this last letter, I'll say to the opposition whip — I wrote another letter to David Johnson. I said:

"You will recall that on February 27, 1997, I directed a letter to you urging you to place Bill 125 on the order paper for debate or as early as possible for debate and passage.

"Unfortunately, your government has chosen not to call Bill 125 for consideration by the House despite continued pleas from me as Liberal House leader and Windsor-Walkerville MPP Dwight Duncan as Liberal transportation critic to do so.

"I have indicated to you at every regular House leaders' meeting the willingness of the Liberal caucus to process this bill in one day and to have brief hearings conducted in Toronto in a legislative committee and to complete third reading expeditiously.

"If this bill is as great a priority as your Minister of Transportation has claimed at well-publicized press conferences, I cannot comprehend why you have refused to call this legislation for debate.

"Again, as I have on many occasions in the past, I request that you proceed with Bill 125 immediately. You may be assured of our support and our expeditious consideration of this legislation."

Signed by myself in my capacity as House leader of the Ontario Liberal Party.

I repeat that offer today. We have brought forward our own bill to be helpful as part of the consideration for this House. I hope the government will do the right thing and proceed and not simply make excuses and point fingers at everybody else.

Mrs Marland: I'm very grateful to have this opportunity to speak to this resolution today for a number of reasons, the most important of which is Mr Tyrrell, who was the second person killed by a flying truck tire and was one of the two family members who were included in the inquest. Mr Tyrrell and his wife were constituents of mine; in fact, his wife had been a friend of our family up north at our cottage for a very long time, about 20 years.

I want to say at the outset that a few of the comments made by the member for Cochrane South, in terms of hours of operation and the policing of how long an

individual may drive, I actually agree with. I think there has to be control over how long these drivers are on the road. I agree with him on that part of his argument.

I also agree with him when he says that this should not be a partisan issue, because when we're talking about —

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): When are you going to fix it? When are you going to fix the problem?

Mrs Marland: I say to the member for Lake Nipigon that we've had a fairly constructive debate this afternoon on this resolution, and I would appreciate not having your interjections, because we have not been interjecting with the other speakers.

Interjection.

Mrs Marland: Mr Speaker, I ask you to call the member for Lake Nipigon to order.

It could be easier for us to be non-partisan except for the wording of the resolution. There is one part of the wording that I personally find very offensive. I ask Mr Duncan, under whose name the resolution stands, to try to address what it was he was trying to say here and maybe the interpretation won't be as bad as it is on face value. He says in the resolution, "Whereas the Minister of Transportation has attempted to exploit the issue for political purposes, choosing numerous photo opportunities to advance the need for truck safety."

I find that a very unfortunate statement. It's one of these issues, I suppose, where if you don't do anything, you don't win either. Personally, I think the Minister of Transportation has been doing his ultimate best to try to solve this very serious problem. Yes, there have been photographs taken in different instances when he has made different announcements, because we want to — and I'm sure you would want us to — publicize the need for improved truck safety. That doesn't mean doing something in isolation in an office tower in downtown Toronto that happens to house the Ministry of Transportation's offices; it means getting out on the highways and the road systems of this province and indicating to the trucking industry that we will not tolerate the kinds of infractions that have been brought to the attention of this government in the last year and a half that we have been in office.

I feel, for the Minister of Transportation, that that is an unfortunate sentence in this resolution. He and his staff have been very conscientious in picking up this subject and literally running full out to try to solve it.

We all see examples from time to time that we wish we didn't see. I have to mention that last Sunday evening I was returning from an event in Hamilton, driving eastbound on Highway 403 past Hamilton Bay, I think it's called. I was driving at 108 or 110 kilometres an hour, and a very large tractor-trailer passed me at 130. The reason I know he was going that fast is that in the next few kilometres, he was passing everyone on that section of Highway 403, weaving in and out to the extent that I wrote his licence plate down. That kind of truck jockey we do not need on our highways in this province, and that kind of driver is the kind of driver that the Ontario Trucking Association itself is concerned about.

I want to say that I'm very grateful for the fact that our government has responded to the recommendations of the inquest into Ms Worona's and Mr Tyrrell's deaths.

It's amazing when you look at the recommendations from the inquest and see just exactly how much we have done with those recommendations in a relatively short time. Yes, we haven't solved all the problems, but it's very interesting to note that we have done a lot more in a very short time than was done by the previous governments. They may have their own reasons for some of the things they did or some of the things they didn't do; nevertheless, nobody's hands have been clean in solving this issue of truck safety.

For all of us who are commuting every day on the major highways in this province, we all have second thoughts about when we come up behind a truck or when a truck has just passed us or we're in that configuration where we're in the centre lane with trucks on either side of us. Certainly when I see my daughter driving with two of our grandchildren in one vehicle, a small car, I have a lot of second thoughts about truck safety. I'm just the same as every other person in this Legislature, I believe, who wants to be part of the solution in doing whatever we can.

Actually, it's very interesting to see the quote attributable to Mr Bill Wrye, the Minister of Transportation on May 1, 1990. He's talking about the problem, and he says: "We are continuing to review this problem" — the effect of deregulation on the industry — "very carefully with the Ontario Trucking Association and leaders of various trucking firms in Ontario to ensure that the industry, which is such an important one, with almost 250,000 jobs, remains a very viable industry in this province."

1640

It's also interesting to note that in 1989, with the wonderful coalition between the Liberals and the NDP, the Liberal government stopped enforcing weight limits on dump trucks after a convoy of dump trucks surrounded the Legislature in protest. Those of us who were here in the Legislature at that time well recall that convoy tying up the Queen's Park circle.

The one thing I would say to Mr Dwight Duncan, under whose name this resolution stands, is that in December he actually tried to exploit two family deaths by blaming cutbacks as the cause. In fact, at that time there had been no cutbacks and the minister did correct him publicly.

I think we have to approach this subject very honestly, very sincerely and very carefully. Otherwise, if we turn it into a totally political football, we will not get the resolution we need.

I simply say that there were 27 recommendations that came out of that coroner's inquest that apply to the Ministry of Transportation. We have implemented 15 of those 27, we have partially implemented four and we are working on another five. In particular, I highlighted some of these most serious recommendations because I think the public needs to know which recommendations have been implemented.

A very serious one was that mandatory training and certification programs should be established for all individuals involved in tire and wheel installation, with input from the Ontario Trucking Association and the Canadian Transportation Equipment Association. That has

been done. Mandatory programs were implemented in November 1996, administered by the OTA, and to date 4,000 people have taken the training.

Another recommendation is about judiciary training. This in itself is quite interesting because the recommendation of the inquest was that prosecutors and the judiciary should be educated in the consequences of mechanical and load infractions endangering public safety and fraudulent use of annual inspection certificates.

That has been done also. The Ministry of Transportation has taken great care in ensuring that the proper evidence is brought forward in the prosecution of serious safety violations in court. This is the best way to properly educate the judiciary. We have also provided specific education and awareness opportunities to the judiciary in parts of the province. This is a serious recommendation of the coroner's inquest.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Essex South, come to order.

Mrs Marland: Another one was on installation. It was recommended that invoices of work orders for work requiring the removal of truck tractor wheels should state the torque at installation using a torque method approved by the manufacturer, and the need to retorque. That also is a recommendation which has been done and is in fact being enhanced further. Proper torquing and retorquing procedures are included in the training and certification program.

Another one is reporting of defects by mechanics. We often hear the public asking us why that isn't happening. There was a recommendation of the coroner's inquest that qualified mechanics should be required to red-tag trucks and trailers which have defects that might present a risk to public safety — another recommendation that has been done. Mechanics must by law identify safety defects, note them on the work order and repair them prior to certification of the vehicle.

One other, because I am sharing this time with my colleagues, is a pre-trip inspection. The recommendation of the inquest was that owners and drivers should be educated on the consequences of failure to comply with regulations requiring a proper 27-point pre-trip inspection. That also has been done and is being enhanced further. The Ministry of Transportation has done numerous education and awareness seminars on pre-trip inspections.

What this is saying is that our government did listen to the recommendations of the coroner's inquest into those first two terrible tragedies, people who were innocently driving on one of our highways who met their death. Thank goodness we acted quickly. We still all of us have work to do. The problem isn't solved instantly; it didn't develop overnight either.

Finally, in closing, I want to mention a letter that I received from another constituent, who ironically lives very close to where the Tyrrell family lived in my riding. John Walmark wrote to me on April 30. He recalled that his father, who was a supervisor with the CN truck division for many years, had told him about how "CN installed governors on all vehicles. These devices would give a detailed printout of the history of the driver's trip and could tell speed, time stopped and various engine

operating details. It would also restrict the speed of the vehicle by limiting the engine revs."

I'm sure governors are being used by some trucking companies. Maybe that's a very realistic solution that we should look at, especially to address the member for Cochrane South's comments about how long these drivers drive uninterrupted. Maybe through some system like that we can control the hours of rest and hours off driving.

When you think of a 20,000-pound truck with its full load trying to stop to avoid a crash, trying to cope with a mechanical failure or defect that wasn't detectable ahead of time, all of that responsibility rests on the shoulders of the operator. I believe the responsibility for the solution to this problem rests on the shoulders of all of us in this Legislature, so that when we have further regulation changes and legislative changes, it can be dealt with in a non-partisan, expedient manner.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I'm pleased to be able to speak today on my colleague's opposition day motion that relates to road safety. I think the minister would know that it's more than just filling the potholes of our highways that lends itself to road safety. There are many more issues in our driving public that need to be addressed. I think the people of Ontario have a certain lack of confidence currently in this minister and his approach to road safety.

In Ontario there are over 16,000 school buses out on our roads every day. There are 810,000 children getting on and off school buses every day in Ontario. Some of them are very young, as young as five years old. Those children, no matter how old they are, rely on the public stopping behind or in front of those school buses when the red lights are flashing. Their lives depend on the driving public to stop when the red lights are flashing on a school bus as they board or disembark. But we find all too often that people are passing these school buses with reckless abandon. Over the past number of years there have been over 80 injuries and there have been, more tragically, at least 11 children killed. We need to look into what is known as school bus safety. For the children, we must look at the law as it exists and look at what we can do to protect their lives.

1650

The existing law states that a bus driver must positively identify the driver of a vehicle that passes a school bus when those red lights are flashing. I've spoken with many bus drivers, police and people who drive their own vehicles, and they recognize that it is near to impossible to identify the driver of a vehicle as they pass by a school bus. There are a number of reasons why. One might be the speed with which they are passing. Another might be that many vehicles today have blacked-out windows; they're darkened and very hard to see through.

More importantly, the school bus drivers are watching their precious cargo of young people either getting on or getting off the bus. They refer to these children as "my children." For that hour or so in the morning and that hour or so in the late afternoon, the school bus drivers refer to these young men and women as "my children." They believe they are in their custody, and indeed they are, for that time. It is near to impossible to identify a driver passing a school bus.

It's even more difficult when they pass the bus from the back to the front, because the school bus driver only sees the back of their head. How do you make a positive identification of a driver when you see only the back of their head? School bus drivers have said the public knows what the current law is. It's gotten to the point where school bus drivers say they have witnessed people going by the bus when it's stopped and those red lights are flashing and they're shielding their faces because they know a positive identification is the only way to make a proper charge. I have introduced Bill 78 to address this issue.

Bill 78 does change the fines, but more importantly, it brings about vehicle liability. This would allow for school bus drivers to identify a vehicle by licence plate number if they indeed pass that bus while the red lights are flashing. This is an eyewitness account of a crime. It's an eyewitness account of someone disobeying the law. School bus drivers, police and others say this is the only way to assist school bus drivers in enforcing the law and protecting our children.

When we talk about vehicle liability, the owner of the car would be responsible. However, the owner of the vehicle could and probably would identify the driver of that vehicle if indeed it was someone other than themselves. The fines for the driver are less in dollar amount than the fines for the owner, so there is an incentive for the owner to come forward and say a family member, a friend or someone else was driving the car that day. The bill does not fine both the driver and the owner; it is one or the other.

Bill 78 had unanimous support in this House, and I appreciate that very much. All parties recognize that we need a strong deterrent and a strong message to the driving public here in Ontario that jeopardizing children's lives won't be tolerated.

I've cited some of the deaths and injuries over the past years, but we've also had numerous near misses. We've had far too many situations where people are passing school buses on a regular basis. School bus drivers say they are passed when their red lights are flashing as many as 20 or 30 times in a month. Depending on the driver, the route and the situation, they're passed twice a day, sometimes three times a day. I admit there might even be days when they're not passed at all, but they are passed far too often. If they are passed, let's say, four times per shift, day and night, late afternoon, and there are 16,000 buses on Ontario roads — I'll let you do the mathematics — it's happening far too often and it's jeopardizing the safety and the lives of the children in Ontario.

I was interested to hear the minister yesterday talking about absolute liability and how it would pertain to his truck safety bill. He said that absolute liability will remain as part of the comprehensive bill. But he said vehicle owner liability is unfair and onerous. It is not when compared to absolute liability. This bill has the support of the public. We've had legal advice that it will withstand the courts. It will protect our children. Parents, drivers, school boards, municipalities, and the list goes on, support Bill 78.

Driving is a privilege here in Ontario, not an automatic right. When those red lights are flashing, it means stop.

It does not mean slow down, it does not mean proceed with caution; it means stop. We need to send a strong deterrent and a message to the driving public that the passing of school buses will not be tolerated. This bill is neither unfair nor onerous on the owner of a vehicle. It will help to protect the children of Ontario. We need to move forward and have vehicle liability through either Bill 78 or any bill the minister might bring forth. Without it, we will not be able to get convictions, we will not be able to give fines and we will not be able to protect the children of Ontario.

Mr Pouliot: There's two minutes — so much to say and again so little time. If I didn't like the minister so much, I would think he would have as a licence plate, as the Minister of Transportation, "So many pedestrians and yet so little time."

We've been waiting for them to call the bill. The member from Mississauga is quite right; it goes beyond party lines. It's not that people have done nothing. Everyone is interested in road safety. Who wouldn't be? We encourage this government and we know it will do what's right and take its responsibilities seriously.

When we were the government, wheels were not falling off at the same rate, but it had nothing to do with our government, the Liberals or the present Conservative government. Truck traffic has more than doubled in seven years. People are insistent on door-to-door delivery, just-in-time delivery. You've got the phenomenon of deregulation. Add to it the fact that we went through a very acute recession for a period of no less than four years. People did not have the opportunity to renew or overhaul or change vehicles, so they're paying the price.

We were encouraged, when our turn came up, to have graduated drivers' licences; we formed the blue ribbon committee with the Ontario Trucking Association; we increased the number of blitzes; we went to the factories and convinced them to install slack-adjuster brakes on their new vehicles; we changed the onus to a shared onus, so that both drivers and owners of the vehicle would be responsible for excess weight and hence better repartition on axle weight.

We did all this, the government before us did a lot and the government of the day will do a lot too, for it is necessitated by the people. We're waiting for the government to call the bill so that we can look at it, scrutinize it and no doubt support it.

1700

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'm pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak on the government's commitment to truck safety here in Ontario. While mulling over the issue and considering how to address it today, I recalled the words of Donald H. McGannon, who said, "Leadership is action, not position." This sentiment serves very well to illustrate our government's philosophy, especially with regard to truck safety.

For the record, let's recall the actions taken to date by this government to improve the safety of the roads in Ontario.

This government has already passed two road safety bills. With Bill 55, there are increased fines for truck safety offences and an automatic 90-day suspension for

impaired drivers. Bill 92 includes several truck safety measures. Among these are the expanded powers for the registrar of motor vehicles, including a provision giving them the right to refuse to issue a commercial vehicle operator record and to prevent bad operators from avoiding sanctions; enshrining in legislation the carrier safety rating system; and the requirement that the operators keep MTO advised of the size of their truck fleet and the distances the vehicles have travelled.

It should also be noted that the Ministry of Transportation has increased enforcement efforts. In fact, last year staff inspected in excess of some 37,000 vehicles. Of these, 19,000 trucks were pulled off the road because they failed to pass maintenance standards. It is significant to keep in mind that these trucks may not return to the road until they meet those standards.

Also, the Target '97 program was introduced, which yielded some 79 recommendations; of these, 72 are currently being implemented and the remaining seven require further review or legislation; some of these will be addressed in the spring road safety bill. Some 27 recommendations were also made as a result of the Worona and Tyrrell inquest. Of the 27 that applied to the Ministry of Transportation, 15 have been implemented and a further four are partially implemented and, finally, the ministry is working with Target '97 to find ways to implement another five recommendations, a total of some 24.

These are only the highlights of our achievements over the past two years. It is by no means exhaustive, but it undoubtedly illustrates the government's commitment to action on the issue of road safety in Ontario. But perhaps any such review of initiatives should also include some comparison. For example, what action on road safety do we find when looking back over 10 years of Liberal and NDP leadership? Was there any substance or action taken during those years? As far as I can see, virtually no action was taken during their term, as this issue was obviously deemed of little priority.

This then leads us to another important fact. Contrary to what the Liberals and NDP would have us believe, truck-related injuries and deaths are not a phenomenon which began with our election back on June 8, 1995. In fact, in January and April 1995 there were two deaths from flying truck wheels. Although the House was recessed for most of the NDP's last year in office, they could have called the House back to deal with these issues if they chose to.

We have been addressing and will continue to address this problem. The irony of the member for Windsor-Walkerville's resolution seems very apparent to me. The opposition member has accused the Minister of Transportation of exploiting the road safety issue for political purposes and of failing to act in a meaningful way to address road safety in Ontario. Not only is this absurd, but it is the member opposite whose intention might be interpreted as opportunistic. While the Minister of Transportation has over the last two years been implementing and researching new initiatives designed to protect Ontario's drivers, where has the attention of the opposition been, or is their recent focus on Bill 125 an attention-grabbing ploy on their part?

I'm sorry to say that I must question the motives of the members opposite when it comes to their sudden involvement in the truck safety issue. For so many years there has been inaction and silence from them in this particular area, a pattern, by the way, which this government has broken with the passage of two road safety bills in 1996 alone. Now, quite suddenly, the opposition members are worried about the speed at which Bill 125 is passed.

The fact is that the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Al Palladini, has already made a commitment to a third road safety bill. This bill will comprehensively address the safety of drivers in Ontario, including the unchanged Bill 125.

At this point, I think it is also important to mention the member opposite's attempt in December 1996 to exploit the tragic Campbell-Jessiman deaths by blaming cutbacks. As I recall, there were no such cutbacks, and the minister publicly corrected this accusation.

After relative silence on road safety for so long, I would like to suggest that perhaps the opposition should tread a little more carefully when accusing the minister of attempting to exploit this issue for political purposes.

I would like to conclude by repeating Mr McGannon's sentiment, "Leadership is action, not position." This government has taken definitive action on this issue, and for the first time in over 10 years real leadership is being shown to ensure that Ontarians can drive the roads in our province without fearing for their safety.

I look forward to further improvements and tough new regulations when Minister Palladini introduces his third road safety bill in the very near future. Quite clearly, this government has taken action and continues to take action. There is no doubt in my mind about who the true leaders of road safety improvement are in Ontario today.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I am pleased to take the next few minutes available to me and hopefully make a contribution on the important piece of legislation we await being introduced by the government side and the minister. I am speaking in support of the resolution put forward by our colleague the member for Windsor-Walkerville.

I think this goes to the core of the matter. We are speaking of making the roads safe not only for the vehicles using our roads but for the other people as well; not only the large trucks we are aiming at with Bill 125 but any others who use our minor and major arterial roads as well. They are used by people going on vacation, travelling, going to work and carrying school kids, as the member for Essex-Kent has mentioned before; and we have major motor transportation that not only transports goods but, very often, very dangerous goods. I think it's incumbent upon every member of the House to make sure the bill is approved as quickly as possible.

When motorists are faced with high traffic volume, speeding — which does take place, whether we wish to accept it or not — and road conditions, I would say there is a direct relationship between flying wheels and the condition of vehicles themselves. I think there is a direct relation between vehicle condition and road conditions.

I know the minister's heart is in the right place. I know he means well when he says he wants to remove from

our roads the unsafe and whatever other name he has attached to it and make sure our roads are safer and save lives as well. But having his heart in the right place is not enough. I think the minister has a major problem. He has a major hurdle on his hands, and evidently he doesn't know how and he doesn't have the power to overcome it.

His problem is this: Mike Harris, the Premier, and his own caucus. I believe the minister has had all the good intentions to bring the bill back and introduce it to the House for a very speedy passage. So what has been the problem here? The problem has been the agenda of the Premier and his own caucus and his own government.

1710

It's most unfortunate that the Premier did not attach enough interest and responsibility to Bill 125. He has introduced of his own will all kinds of other legislative pieces and they have pushed that legislation through this House very quickly. So when we hear that the opposition has been stalling, that they could have voted on and debated in this House — come on. I have to remind the Premier and the minister responsible for introducing this piece of legislation that when they wanted to introduce their own legislation their own way, when they wanted, they had absolutely no difficulties, no problem, in spite of the opposition of the opposition parties. They went ahead and they did it.

What's so sad is that they moved so quickly on a number of legislative proposals that have had absolutely no major bearing on the action of the government, if you will, or on our side or the public at large. Some of it favoured some particular groups, and I think it was the member for St Catharines who mentioned Bill 98. There was absolutely no rush to push that particular bill through, but they had a commitment. They had to favour a particular group: developers.

I'm asking the minister, who is present — I'm pleased he is here for the debate — and the Premier, what is more important: to make sure that our roads are safe and to save some lives or to have more money in some developer's pockets? I'm sure the minister does not agree with that, but I'm sure he has a problem with the Premier himself in trying to bring this particular piece of legislation, Bill 125, into the House for speedy approval.

It's fine to accuse the opposition, "Well, you didn't want to debate it; you didn't want to vote on it." Even today we offered the minister and the Premier to use our time here today to bring that back. They could have done that. The minister himself, with all due respect — as I said, I know that he means well — withdrew the bill. He said, "I'm going to bring in a revised bill some time in the fall." If it weren't for us, if it weren't for the opposition's sake — come on, summer is coming; people are getting killed. You've got to do something about it. Bring it back. We agree and we're going to support you.

But the poor minister, with all due respect, doesn't have the ear and the sympathy of Mr Harris, the Premier of this province. He doesn't think that saving lives and making our roads safe is a priority, and that is most unfortunate. When you're driving at 100 kilometres an hour on a major highway, especially if it's raining and you're behind one of those 18-wheelers, whatever they

are called — I'm sure the minister is familiar with those large trucks — no one wants to drive behind one of those trucks. So you're going to move to the other lane, and if there is another truck, you're squeezed between two large vehicles. If you were to hit a bump or if you were to hit a pothole, you wouldn't know what to do.

So I'm saying to the minister, I'm saying to the Premier, I'm saying to the government side: Rethink it. Bring it in. Let's get on with it. It's people's lives and I think we should move on very quickly.

I don't think it's a question of playing politics or finding excuses with an issue such as this one here. As I said before, if the government really wanted to pay attention to what's happening out there on our roads, to the lives that have already been lost, to making sure that our roads are safe, they would have brought this piece of legislation back. It's sad that the Premier has his own agenda, and his own agenda is not to give priority to this particular piece of legislation.

They have introduced a number of other pieces of legislation. I'd just mention Bill 98. There is the other one, the injured workers. There is cutting the school boards and the megacity legislation. Even when people said, "We don't want it," they went ahead and pushed it. So who says to the government, "Don't bring it"?

My time is up, unfortunately. I'm getting the time notice. I hope the government side will support the motion of the member for Windsor-Walkerville and bring this into the House, that the minister will say: "Let's do it. It's the right thing to do. Let's bring it in and let's approve it."

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I'm just going to bring forward several points that I think should be addressed. First of all, there was no single contributing factor for wheel-offs. What that means is it's not bearings, it's not faulty parts, it's not overtightening or undertightening. Actually, there is more overtightening of wheel studs contributing than undertightening, but there was no single contributing factor in all the inspections that have been done of all the wheel-offs.

There was mention by the member opposite about the length or the size of vehicles. If the length or the carrying weight of the vehicles were a concern or part of the problem, we would find that in England there should be a considerable decrease in the number of wheel-offs, because they have addressed the length, oversize and length and width within the vehicles, and they are seeing virtually the exact same number of wheel-offs that we are here in Ontario.

Tire retention devices: We constantly hear, "Why not have these devices where if a wheel comes off, the wheel stays with the truck and thereby doesn't cross any pavement or cause any problems?" However, there are significant indicators that give us the belief that these may actually contribute to greater problems rather than helping the situation. What I'm referring to is that when the wheel stays with the truck, the truck has a tendency to flip. It's a lot more serious when you have a 120,000-pound vehicle going down a road rather than a wheel.

Believe me, we've heard of quite a few devices or instruments to try and assess the situation, and I have

personally talked to quite a few individuals who thought they had the answer, yet when we're dealing with it, we haven't quite found any specific device or instrument that will assess or notify us that wheels are potentially a problem at that time.

One of the things I want to talk about is the truck blitzes. What I am referring to there is that we in government hear from all sides. We hear from the truckers that we're being too hard on them, that we've come down on them too hard and that we have to watch out, whereas we hear from other individuals that we're not being nearly hard enough. I think the fact is that in Ontario we have the toughest package of legislation geared towards trucks of any jurisdiction in North America. When you look at that, how do people compete in Ontario and what do they do when Quebec trucks or trucks from another province or state cross into Ontario? What standards do those trucks have to fall under? We make it very clear that if you want to travel in Ontario, you follow Ontario standards, and we stick to those beliefs.

The truck blitzes: I had heard from a number of members from a number of caucuses that we were being unfair and that we were being too hard and that people were taken off for simple things such as a dirty licence plate. However, when I found out that locally there were a number of truck blitzes taking place in my riding, I quietly showed up without informing anyone. I waited an hour after the truck blitz had started. We showed up when there were some vehicles taken out of service. I took my own police, truck drivers, 35-year mechanics. These were people who said to me, "Your ministry is being too hard on the trucking industry."

The trucks had been pulled off and were sitting there when we got there. I said, "Okay, you go over that truck and tell me: Should it be taken off the road or not?" They went over that truck themselves. They looked at it, they inspected it, and they said: "You know something? You guys are tougher than I would be." These are the people who are telling us that we're being too tough on them. So we've gone out there, we're looking at it, and actually our inspectors are doing a great job. They've turned these people around, and now they believe that, "You guys are actually doing a fantastic job." It was quite a surprise.

There were two types of inspections, one where you pick a lot, you get a group. It was the OPP, the Durham regional police and the MTO that were involved in the situation. What they do is go out and drive around until they find a truck that looks rather sceptical whether it's going to pass. They don't go around picking trucks that they figure are going to pass the inspection, so they pick ones that they have targeted. They bring this truck into the inspection station and they run it through. Lo and behold, you have a high number of out-of-service rates because of the fact that you're targeting the vehicles that you feel are not going to be passing the inspections. That was one type.

1720

I attended another type of inspection as well. That took place on the 401. In one hour, 276 trucks had passed through the inspection station. Out of the 276 trucks, there were 12 that were identified and removed from the

line as it was going through. Out of those 12, it averaged between three and four every hour that were pulled out of service because they didn't pass the inspections.

When I went back and talked to our members who had concerns about the fact that we were taking people out of service for such things as —

Mr Gerretsen: And they said, "Be quiet, Jerry."

Mr Ouellette: Actually they didn't say, "Be quiet," to the member opposite. They said, "I want to hear." They said, "You're taking our guys out for dirty licence plates."

I told them: "You go back and get the inspection certificate and look. Maybe they had a dirty licence plate on there, but there will be a number of significant things on the inspection that would take them out of service."

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

Mr Ouellette: The member for Kingston and The Islands is constantly coming across. He made some comments about — what specifically was that? — the licence suspension. Actually, there has been a conviction. The one conviction I'll bring forward took place in Parry Sound. It was to the tune of \$18,000, which is a significant amount. These are some of the things that we have done and we are continuing to do.

You talk about unscrupulous truck drivers as well, who transfer their assets into other companies and avoid all the problems that come forward with having that company being dealt with by the Ministry of Transportation.

Mr Bisson: Name names. Name the company.

Mr Ouellette: The member from the third party is asking me to name names. We deal with everybody who is a problem, not just one specific company.

Mr Bisson: Was it Tudhope? That's what I want to know.

Mr Ouellette: What we did there was address the situation. If somebody wants to avoid dealing with the government by transferring assets, we get involved in it. We have addressed that issue and are taking care of it.

The number of wheel-offs: We're constantly hearing that there are more and more wheels off. Actually, 10 or 15 years ago, the OPP used to help a trucker roll the wheels up and put them on to get him off the side of the road. Now it's quite a different situation. It's the same percentage of wheels falling off trucks; the only difference is that we're reporting now and recording the incidents, doing incident reports so that we know exactly what's taking place in those situations.

We talk about the lick-and-stick, as it was called by the member from the third party. What he's referring to is illegal safety inspections. Somebody goes out, they say they do an inspection and they don't really do it. If that is the case, they're breaking the law. If they're breaking the law, that's a conscious decision that they make to go around it. We'll charge those ones, and we do every one that we find out. We will continue to do that to ensure that our roads are as safe as possible.

Pre-trip inspections: Every time a truck driver goes out there, they do a pre-trip inspection that includes 27 inspection points. It was mentioned earlier that truck drivers don't do these inspections. They're required to.

Not only are they required to, but in order to get their licence, they have to do this pre-trip inspection so that the inspector knows that they know what they're doing in that particular case.

Those are just a number of the issues. I appreciate the time.

Mr Gerretsen: I've been listening with great interest to the debate that has taken place over the last couple of hours, and I have heard nothing but excuses from the government side. The general public out there really isn't interested in what the NDP didn't do or what the Peterson government 10 years ago didn't do; it's a problem today, and they want this government to do something. What this resolution wants the government to do and what the people out there want this government to do is to simply call back Bill 125.

Let's talk about Bill 125, because I'm sure the average person who is watching this out there wants to know exactly what is in Bill 125. It's a very simple bill. It goes for a page and a half. What does it call for? It simply calls for an amendment to section 84 of the Highway Traffic Act, and it states: "Where a wheel becomes detached from a commercial motor vehicle...while the motor vehicle is on a highway, the operator of the commercial motor vehicle and the owner...are guilty of an offence."

Then it says, "Upon conviction of an offence...the person is liable to a fine of not less than \$2,000 and not more than \$50,000."

It further goes on to say:

"It is not a defence to a charge under this subsection...that the person exercised...diligence to avoid or prevent the detaching of the wheel."

Finally, it says that "the holder of the permit or the plate portion of the permit shall be deemed to be the owner of the vehicle."

That's all the bill says. It merely increases the fine as far as the owner and operator of the vehicle are concerned. It's a very simple one-and-a-half-page bill, which was introduced on February 24. I completely concur with what my House leader said earlier, that on a number of occasions it's been made quite clear to the government House leader that there would be unanimous consent to have this bill passed in one day. That's what we're talking about here today; that's what the resolution basically talks about. It says, "Government, bring this back."

For the life of me — the minister can talk about all sorts of comprehensive legislation that he wants to introduce somewhere down the line. Why can't he call this bill back and simply have it passed? It's a very simple section that merely increases the fines. There may very well be other things required as well, but what the public wants right now is to make sure these dangerous vehicles — I'm not for a moment suggesting that all trucks on the highway are dangerous, but that the dangerous ones, where you've got wheels flying off trucks, be removed from the highways and that the fines be increased.

That's what we're talking about, that's what we want this government to do, and that's what this Minister of Transportation has refused to do. Let's get that clear.

Second, we just heard the previous member, the former parliamentary assistant of the Minister of Transportation, make it sound as if there are only a few trucks driving around that don't meet all the specifications. Well, I'm reading here from a report that was in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record on May 14 which states: "Almost half the trucks" — and this is as the result of a blitz — "stopped along Highway 400, including what one policeman called 'a horror show on wheels' were detained for mechanical and safety violations. Eighty-five plates were removed and 273 charges were laid for such things as poorly maintained brakes, faulty steering and loose wheels in a two-day safety blitz, which involved more than 120 transportation ministry inspectors and police officers."

I think that's a very tragic matter. These — what was it? — 199 trucks were on the roads that shouldn't have been there. They were causing an immediate danger to the motoring public, to the people who are using our highways on a day-to-day basis.

I'm a great believer that the proof is in the pudding. I always believe that if there's enough money spent by a particular ministry in the right kinds of program areas, some of these problems can be dealt with. Let's look and see what's happened to the Ministry of Transportation budget over the last two years. It has been decimated. On the capital side of things, we have gone from a budget of \$2.2 billion to a budget of \$1 billion in the Ministry of Transportation. That is a decrease of 46%; that money goes into building new roads and into redoing the roads out there, making sure they're in a good state of repair.

How can the minister, with that kind of evidence, get up in the House here today and suggest that transportation and the proper maintenance of the highways in this province are a priority of this government when the funding for any capital repairs has been reduced by almost 50%, by 46%? That to me is totally unacceptable. When you look at the operating budget, it too has been reduced by some \$76 million in the last year.

Minister, don't stand in this House and suggest to the people of Ontario that transportation is a priority of this government, because it just ain't so. The facts and figures in the government's own budget document clearly indicate that. Transportation is not a priority, and obviously road safety, with the kinds of violations these trucks are involved in, is not a priority either, or else they would have done something about it.

1730
How do the people out there feel? It's very interesting to read the Angus Reid survey that clearly indicates that the people who use the roads on a day-to-day basis are concerned. For example, in answer to a question that was asked of them: "In general, how would you rate Canada's roads and highways in terms of safety? Do you think Canada's roads and highways are becoming more or less safe?" more than half the people, 55%, perceived there was a reduction in road safety. These are the people who are using the roads on a day-to-day basis.

More than four out of five Ontarian respondents, 83%, felt that travel on Canadian roads and highways had become more dangerous as a result of the upward trend in the number of tractor-trailer trucks. I'm not for a

moment suggesting that we don't need tractor-trailers. Obviously, we need to move our goods around from place to place. Transportation in a country as vast as Canada and in a province as vast as Ontario is an integral part of our economic system. But at the same time, people feel that with the ever-increasing number of trucks that are out there, their use of the road is not as safe as it used to be.

What can we do about it, then? Surely what we can do about it to start off with is to make sure the trucks that are legally using the roads are as safe as possible. For that reason alone the minister shouldn't think about it twice; he should take the suggestion of the opposition, whereby they're basically saying, "Bring the bill forward and we'll pass it in a day." That's been suggested on at least two or three or four or five occasions over the last two or three months: "Bring it forward and let's deal with it. It's a step in the right direction." It's not the end result, but it's a step in the right direction.

When you look at some other facts — I see I've got one minute left — the motoring public out there doesn't feel all that safe and secure with the present situation. We should recall that in 1996 alone, there were 31 reported wheel separations along our highways. There have been seven wheel separations in the first three weeks of this year alone.

The general public want to make sure their highways are safe and sound, and the best way we can make it safe and sound as far as these tractor-trailers are concerned is to make sure there are adequate provisions in the Highway Traffic Act to deal with offenders. As far as we on this side of the House are concerned, Bill 125 would have done it, so Minister, why don't you call Bill 125 back and we'll give it speedy passage.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'm certainly glad to join in the consideration of some of the material we've heard today from the opposition benches. The way I would like to start is to make a factual presentation, an update of exactly where we are. The assertion made that this government isn't interested whatsoever, or hardly at all, in road safety is completely erroneous, documented incorrectly and inadequate in a number of other ways. Let's start with a few of the facts.

First off, we have introduced some bills. We have covered such areas as mandatory wheel installation training. That wasn't done before; that's now in place. We have introduced air brake training and made it mandatory for commercial operators; that wasn't in place. Those are two points.

Third, in the bills that were presented in the last year and a quarter, Bill 55 and Bill 92, we have increased the fines substantially for violations of road safety. We are starting to see some of those in the courts.

Fourth, we're finding that the number of charges has gone up substantially. I would like to make a note that in point of fact, the charges in 1996-97 have gone up approximately 51.6%. Over the last fiscal years the numbers show there were 37,184 level 1 CVSA inspections, which resulted in 19,204 trucks taken out of service. There were 13,723 charges laid as a result of these inspections, and 3,235 plates removed. Those are facts. Those are reliable, solid statistics.

To continue on the factual side to prove that road safety and truck safety are priorities, this government has instituted a policy of zero tolerance for vehicles that fail the CVSA tests. Plates are removed, and they are removed until the vehicles are fixed. We have instituted a carrier rating system that was long overdue and bound it back to the shippers so we will have a registration record in place, that when the shippers are shipping out goods that are overweighting the axles of the long-haul vehicles we will be able to trace it back in terms of liability. That is called coordination, and that is taking a little more time to get into place, but we want to trace the line of responsibility back not only from owner-operators and operators, but to the shippers.

It has been mentioned in this House that the axle weight for gravel trucks was taken off some years ago, approximately seven years ago. We have reinstituted that particular situation, so there are now axle weights and they have to be carefully confined and carefully registered. I think it's important that the motoring public know that, because before, we had seven years of a deal made by previous governments in which that particular point of concern was not dealt with. We have now addressed that.

Those are some of the items.

I want to focus for a few moments on some of the recommendations contained in the Worona-Tyrrell inquest recommendations. At the beginning of this debate, the member for Cochrane South suggested that there wasn't a place, a public forum, in which the public could make comments regarding truck safety and how they would make specific ideas and suggestions achievable.

The purpose of any inquest — unfortunately, we have had some deaths out of this, and I must remind members of this House that the whole issue of trucking safety and wheel separation goes back to long before 1995, if you want to give any dates. If you go back and honestly look at the media reports over the last decade, regardless of the government in power, we have had a number of incidents. Some of them were serious; some of them were fatal.

Mr Gerretsen: Why don't you do something about it?

Mr Hastings: The member for Kingston and The Islands keeps talking about doing something about it. We have pointed out, if he is listening carefully, specific facts. Obviously he doesn't accept the point that reinstituting weighted axles for the gravel trucks is a significant thing in and of itself or combined with all the other initiatives we're looking at, particularly a number of proposals out of Target '97.

I'd like to go back to some of the specific recommendations in that inquest, whose rationale and purpose is to make recommendations. When you have a jury closeted and they come up with specific recommendations to government, the purpose of any inquest is to see that those recommendations are carried out, and we have done so.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member's time is up. Further debate? The member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Mr Duncan: I'd like to begin by reading the last paragraph of the minister's statement to the House on February 24, 1997:

"Members of this House have continually reminded me of their concern about truck safety and in particular about wheel separations.... I believe that once all members have had the opportunity to read this bill, they will consent to its immediate passage into law."

The member for Mississauga South took umbrage at a paragraph in our statement being critical of the government for its media posturing. I'd like to remind the minister that you didn't announce that legislative initiative first in the House, did you? You did it the previous Friday in front of the cameras, not in the House. It had been in the newspapers with the full photo opportunity three days before it came into this House.

1740

I'd like to remind the minister of a few other comments he made: "If safety is not your business, you'll be out of business. We are committed. I'm telling you, I'm going to get the job done in the next 90 days. A few changes are going to happen." That was on January 9. You are now approximately 50 days behind.

We said on February 24, "We welcome this long-overdue bill and say to the minister that we will support it and hope we can pass it this week," long before the filibuster, long before the other issues the government has raised.

Throughout the course of today's discussions I have heard talk about what the government has done. I will acknowledge in this House, and publicly, that I believe the Minister of Transportation is an honourable man who wants to do the best by road safety. I don't believe for one minute that he wants to see death on our highways.

But I need to point out some facts. The government has talked a good game this afternoon about the number of inspections being up. You're absolutely right. Last year they were, but they're still way down from those 10 lost years, according to your own statistics, according to your Road Check '96: Ontario Historical Trends. Another point well worth noting is that the number of vehicles taken out of service last year in all categories was down.

The minister took some umbrage at comments I made about cuts to the budget.

Interjection.

Mr Duncan: Capital cuts have been outlined. Operating cuts have been outlined. To the member opposite, who says I was wrong, I have here a document sent to me by the Ministry of Transportation, dated March 5, in response to a very specific question I had placed to them in a briefing, where I said, "What is the complement that's approved and what percentage of it is full?" Lo and behold, the complement as of March 5 was not full. In fact, almost a quarter of the approved complement had sat empty.

The government members have talked about Ontario's role relative to other jurisdictions. Just as a point of curiosity, for those government members who have been talking about your Historical Trends, I will note for you that in your Road Check '96 data you can't even distinguish how many wheel separations or wheel problems there are because you don't separate them from tire problems. That is an issue they've addressed in Great Britain, that is an issue they've addressed in the United States.

The government members, in their briefing notes from the Premier's office, would not have been made aware of the National Transportation Safety Board, Washington, DC, report which we secured from the government, which implemented a number of the things contained in our bill in 1991 in the United States.

We have in front of us a government that has selectively used statistics, not told the whole story, and set its own bar. The minister, Sunday, January 9, quoted in the *Toronto Sun*: "I ain't going away. The bad operators, they're going to go away," within 90 days — big talk, and we've heard it before.

I don't know what has happened since February 24. Yes, we think there may be a problem with absolute liability. We asked the minister again for a copy of the government's legal opinion on absolute liability, and in a response dated March 5: "Would the ministry supply a copy of the Ministry of the Attorney General's legal opinion regarding wheel detachment legislation?" Answer: "The Ministry of the Attorney General's legal opinion on wheel detachment legislation is considered advice to cabinet and therefore cannot be provided." That's nuts. Bring it out.

We now have three legal opinions, and I have some sympathy for the minister's position, because those legal opinions differ. We don't have an exact answer. But we do know this: In spite of the importance of 125, it is but a drop in the bucket relative to the recommendations contained in Target '97. When the minister brought forward those recommendations, the opposition said, "Good. Let's deal with them." The opposition said: "Let's get on with the job. Let's have a bill. Let's debate it. Let's see what you're proposing."

The minister knows full well that a number of the recommendations in Target '97 can only be implemented by regulation. Those of us in the opposition who want safer roads — and I believe the minister wants safer roads — want to have those hearings. In January we offered a non-partisan committee, a select committee of this Legislature, to review and respond to those issues in a manner that would allow for a full public debate. I'll remind the minister and members of the government that Target '97 was not debated publicly. I tell you, we liked a lot of the recommendations.

It's really easy to bring in a bill. What we don't understand is, why haven't you done it? I will remind you. The minister in Hansard, January 13, 1997: "We will not stop until Ontario's roads are the safest in North America." The *Toronto Star*, February 21, 1997: "Wheels separating from trucks is a very serious problem, one that shows no signs of improving" — your words, Minister, not mine — "and one that can't wait any longer." That was February 21 of this year. February 22, 1997, the *Toronto Sun*: "We can't continue to accept this. It is a serious problem." The *Globe and Mail*, March 11, 1997: "If safety is not your business, you're not going to be in business in Ontario." The *Toronto Sun*, March 11, 1997: "Our commitment is there." And yes, the *Toronto Sun*, May 13: "I'm not backing off."

Minister, I believe you when you say that. I believe that you want to bring in legislation. I'll remind all the members of this House that this is the first time on the

floor of the Legislature that we've debated this issue. So when you tell us that we've blocked you, filibustered you — you control every day in this House, with the exception of three. This is one of our three and it's the second one since this bill was introduced. I say to you, the proof is in the pudding. It's on our day that we're discussing this issue.

We offered again today to give up this opposition day, to have a debate on a government bill, and you didn't take the bait. We had bluster from the Premier about events long since past. We didn't deal with your own comments that it's a serious problem.

Even today we hear the members talk about the response to the Worona inquest. Yesterday the minister said they had responded to 25; today it's 21. I'll tell you, Minister, the Worona family have asked your office and your ministry for a point-by-point-by-point response and to date they have not had a response. The official opposition has asked for a point-by-point-by-point analysis of your response.

Let me give you one example: the recommendation of the inquest with respect to fines. You said you responded to it. My understanding from those who attended and from the transcript is that not only did you not respond, it was really just a sop. That's why we want a public debate and that's why we want your bill.

1750

We have talked about a lot of issues. We know, and the government knows, there is a serious problem out there. We have brought forward a bill. We have offered a day of debate. We have now, in cooperation with our colleagues in the third party, agreed to a section 125 hearing in the resources development committee so that we can discuss these issues. I think the government ought to do that.

I found it interesting in the Premier's comments in the *Toronto Sun* that he referred to the bill as draconian. I think it needs to be said that the vast majority of trucking companies and truckers in this province operate good rigs and have good business practices. Indeed, the elements of our bill were developed and designed by an industry group. The families of victims support many of those recommendations. We're asking for a bill. We are asking to deal with it as quickly as we can.

There is no magic solution to this problem. We know full well it is not that minister's fault, just as it wasn't the fault of previous ministers or previous governments. Accidents happen on our highways. Tragedy cannot always be averted. The road conditions will impact it; government regulation will impact it. Indeed, in some areas Ontario historically has been a leader, and we acknowledge that.

Let's take the next step. Let's bring in a bill. That's all this resolution asks for. Let's deal with the issues. Let's try to put some closure to this issue. We also suggest to the government that we are prepared to move quickly. When you bring in your bill, we're going to want to look at it. We've arranged for a committee of experts as well as family members to review it. I would invite the minister to share it with us in advance of its introduction in the House so that when we get to the House we can deal with it more quickly.

We will analyse it and we expect that the bravado we've heard will be responded to with concrete and meaningful action. We truly hope the statistics that have been quoted will include reference to the difference between what was implemented from the inquest and what actually happened. We hope the full range of issues that have been addressed in Target '97 will be addressed in the bill.

There has been much give and take on this issue. It's unfortunate we couldn't get it to the floor of the Legislature until today. It is truly unfortunate. We can point fingers at one another and we can be partisan about it, but I say to the government: Give us a bill, just like we suggested in January, and let's get on with it. Let's do the business of the province in this area, where I think there is substantial agreement.

There are so many things the government has driven through with very little legislative debate that are far more far-reaching in their consequence and scope than this, that have gone through with a fraction of the debate, where there has been serious disagreement. So we are troubled as to why we can't get on with this particular issue.

Allow me to conclude today by saying: Bring us a bill. Let's put some closure for these families and friends of victims who have joined us. Let's give a sense that we can put aside this bickering. I don't care if you don't take our bill. We don't care. Bring in your own bill and incorporate it. Have a press conference. Take credit for it. Put it in your campaign literature. But let's deal with it and let's stop the talk.

This government has prided itself on having a busy agenda and moving hard on things. You've taken a lot of heat as members, I know that, because there is substantial disagreement on a number of the issues you've addressed. But this is one where you'll not only have the support of the opposition if the bill is done right and reflects Target '97; it is something that will garner you support in the community, because all of us, the members opposite and the minister, want safer roads in this province. We share that desire. We want to work with you. We regret that it's taken this long even to get the issue to the floor of the Legislature. Let's have a bill, let's debate it, let's pass it and let's make Ontario's roads safer for everybody in this province.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Further debate?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): This is not further debate, Speaker. It seems the debate is finished. I believe there is consent for the House to continue to sit for the purpose of royal assent.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to continue to sit for the purpose of royal assent? Agreed.

Mr Duncan has moved opposition day motion number 5. All those in favour, please say "aye." All those opposed, please say "nay." In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; it will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1756 to 1801.

The Speaker: All those in favour please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Boyd, Marion	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Kormos, Peter	Pouliot, Gilles
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Cleary, John C.	Laughren, Floyd	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony	Wildman, Bud

The Speaker: All those opposed please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Grimmett, Bill	Pettit, Trevor
Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	Ross, Lillian
Boushy, Dave	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Brown, Jim	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, David	Smith, Bruce
Chudleigh, Ted	Jordan, W. Leo	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Danford, Harry	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Leadston, Gary L.	Tsubouchi, David H.
Doyle, Ed	Marland, Margaret	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Vankoughnet, Bill
Elliott, Brenda	McLean, Allan K.	Villeneuve, Noble
Fisher, Barbara	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Fox, Gary	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Froese, Tom	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Galt, Doug	Palladini, Al	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 30; the nays are 52.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost. I'm sorry, I'm used to saying "lost."

Interjections.

The Speaker: I was right. I'm sorry, I thought you were getting up against me.

I declare the motion lost.

Hon David Johnson: Well done, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. They pay me the big money for that.

Hon David Johnson: Mr Speaker, Her Honour awaits to give royal assent to certain bills.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took her seat upon the throne.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

Hon Hilary Weston (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present meetings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

Bill 84, An Act to promote Fire Prevention and Public Safety in Ontario and to amend and repeal certain other Acts relating to Fire Services / Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à promouvoir la prévention des incendies et la sécurité publique en Ontario et modifiant ou abrogeant certaines autres lois relatives aux services de lutte contre les incendies

Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government / Projet de loi 106, Loi concernant le financement des administrations locales

Bill 107, An Act to enact the Municipal Water and Sewage Transfer Act, 1997 and to amend other Acts with

respect to water and sewage / Projet de loi 107, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 1997 sur le transfert des installations d'eau et d'égout aux municipalités et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui a trait à l'eau et aux eaux d'égout.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): In Her Majesty's name, the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills. Au nom de Sa Majesté, l'honorable lieutenant-gouverneure sanctionne ces projets de loi.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

The Speaker: It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1810.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)		Wood, Bob (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	London South / -Sud	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, government House leader / président du Conseil de gestion, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Markham	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Middlesex	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamaria (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Jim (PC)		Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Mississauga West / -Ouest	
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Baird, John R. (PC)
Eglinton	Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme	Nepean	Maves, Bart (PC)
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Niagara Falls	Hudak, Tim (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Niagara South / -Sud	Laughren, Floyd (ND)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Nickel Belt	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Nipissing	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		Galt, Doug (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)		Carr, Gary (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président		Colle, Mike (L)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Norfolk	Vacant
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Northumberland	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)	Oakville South / -Sud	Patten, Richard (L)
Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Oakwood	Grandmaitre, Bernard (L)
Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Oriole	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)
Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)	Oshawa	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Chiarelli, Robert (L)
Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)	Ottawa East / -Est	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)	Ottawa-Rideau	
Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)	Ottawa South / -Sud	
Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)		
Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)	Ottawa West / -Ouest	
		Oxford	

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Markdale Mary Sound	Ruprecht, Tony (L) Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Scarborough North / -Nord Scarborough West / -Ouest Simcoe Centre / -Centre Simcoe East / -Est Simcoe West / -Ouest	Curling, Alvin (L) Brown, Jim (PC) Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) McLean, Allan K. (PC) Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
North Peterborough Port Arthur	Johnson, Bert (PC) Stewart, R. Gary (PC) Gravelle, Michael (L) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Sudbury Sudbury East / -Est Timiskaming Victoria-Haliburton	Bartolucci, Rick (L) Martel, Shelley (ND) Ramsay, David (L) Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)		Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Quinte Rainy River	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC) Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Waterloo North / -Nord	Kormos, Peter (ND) Armott, Ted (PC) Doyle, Ed (PC) Skarica, Toni (PC) Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Kennewick North / -Nord Liverdale S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Conway, Sean G. (L) Churley, Marilyn (ND) Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Welland-Thorold Wellington Wentworth East / -Est Wentworth North / -Nord Willowdale	Kwinter, Monte (L) Vacant Pupatello, Sandra (L) Duncan, Dwight (L) Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
St Andrew-St Patrick St Catharines St Catharines-Brock St George-St David	Bassett, Isabel (PC) Bradley, James J. (L) Froese, Tom (PC) Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Wilson Heights Windsor-Riverside Windsor-Sandwich Windsor-Walkerville York Centre / -Centre	Parker, John L. (PC) Tumbull, David (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Sergio, Mario (L)
Simcoe Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie Scarborough-Agincourt Scarborough Centre / -Centre Scarborough East / -Est Scarborough-Ellesmere	Boushy, Dave (PC) Martin, Tony (ND) Phillips, Gerry (L) Newman, Dan (PC) Gilchrist, Steve (PC) Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York East / -Est York Mills York-Mackenzie Yorkview York South / -Sud	

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 28 May 1997

Mercredi 28 mai 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 mai 1997

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VEHICLE RECOVERY PROGRAM

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): On Monday I attended the unveiling of a new initiative, the vehicle recovery program, launched in my riding by the Hawkesbury OPP detachment in the village of Alfred, where citizens are always pulling together to prevent and eliminate crime.

I want to convey my sincere congratulations to Staff Sergeant Michael Aho of the Hawkesbury OPP detachment. Mr Aho played a very important role in the introduction of this innovative program, a first in Ontario. With small electronic devices, stolen cars can now be quickly identified and recovered.

I want to commend Staff Sergeant Aho and his staff as well as the people from the communities in Prescott and Russell who take an active part in this program.

I know that in recent years the Conservative government has slashed \$17 million from the OPP budget. I certainly hope the Solicitor General is listening and will make sure that funding is sufficient to spread this new program to many more communities in my riding and to communities throughout the province in the very near future.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I'm still reeling from the statement the other day by the Tory environment minister that by polluting Lake Ontario with thousands of pounds of copper and zinc, Ontario Hydro's Pickering nuclear plant is somehow doing Lake Ontario's fish a favour. Not since Morley Kells said in response to a PCB spill that if you're a rat eating PCBs on the highway you might have some problems, or since Ronald Reagan suggested that trees are a major contributor to air pollution, have I heard such environmental claptrap from a public official.

Donald MacKay, an expert quoted in the Star, says that copper and zinc are persistent — they never go away — and are toxic, and they tend to bioaccumulate in fish.

On behalf of Ontario's fish and her citizens who eat them, I brewed up a concoction for the minister which I'll be sending across later. If copper pollution is as benevolent as he claims, perhaps this brew will kickstart his brain.

It's becoming clear that this minister is incapable of taking Hydro's pollution of our drinking water supply

seriously. Minister, stand in this House today and announce that you are referring this entire matter to the Environmental Commissioner, who will take this seriously, so that the truth about what's happening over at Pickering nuclear plant can be uncovered.

TODD BOYS

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to congratulate Todd Boys as the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association's male athlete of the year. The pride of the athletics department at Loyalist College, which is in my riding, Todd, a 20-year-old recreational leadership student, is the first-ever Loyalist College student to be unanimously selected for this award.

While Todd led the men's Lancers volleyball team to a gold at the Ontario championship and a fourth-place finish in the national championship, he maintained a 3.4 grade point average and won several individual honours, including: Canadian Colleges Athletic Association all-Canadian; CCAA championship all-star; OCAA championship MVP; OCAA all-star; OCAA east region scoring champion; OCAA all-star game MVP; Loyalist College male athlete of the year; Loyalist College men's volleyball MVP.

While Todd contemplates a possible move to Europe to use his considerable talents to play professional volleyball there, I want to once again congratulate him on his achievements and wish him well. No doubt, whatever path Todd chooses, he will succeed.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The Ontario Liberal Party has gone through this month's budget, and we are left wondering, along with Ontario's arts and culture community, whether this government will ever understand the value of the arts to our communities, let alone our economy.

We remember the Premier promising on the election trail that he would not cut cultural support. We also recall how the culture minister herself recently said she'd maintain funding for the Ontario Arts Council at last year's level. Yet budget '97 revealed a government intent on extinguishing the artistic spirit that brings fire and life to Ontario's non-profit arts community. It revealed an additional \$5-million cut to the Ontario Arts Council, putting funding levels at 1975 levels.

But culture does matter to the people of Ontario. It matters to the economy of Metropolitan Toronto, where the loss in economic activity already far outweighs what this government has ripped out over the last two years. It

matters to the residents in northern Ontario who access cultural opportunities like the Thunder Bay Symphony and Magnus Theatre, which can only be maintained with stable and predictable government support.

It matters to the individual artists who, as noted by Paul Hoffert, the chair of the Ontario Arts Council, are in essence the research and development wing of Ontario's not-for-profit arts sector.

The Ontario Liberal Party today asks the government to make two commitments: (1) to restore the budget for the arts council to 1996-97 levels and (2) to undertake an immediate round table discussion with provincial representatives from the non-profit arts community to devise a constructive provincial approach for funding to the not-for-profit arts sector.

1340

TRUCKING SAFETY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Yesterday in the debate here on the issue of truck safety, the Minister of Transportation yet again showed his colours when it comes to just who he listens to on the issues of highway and truck safety.

Specifically, yesterday in debate I mentioned that I was looking forward to seeing whether the comprehensive truck policy legislation the government is bringing forward was going to contain some of the issues that have been raised by the public and associated groups who have been trying to lobby this government to address some of the issues of truck safety.

In that debate I think the minister tipped his hand and told us where he's really coming from. I was making comments at that time, saying that I hoped the minister was going to try to listen, at least this time, to CRASH. I quote from Hansard the response of the Minister of Transportation: "No need."

You're the Minister of Transportation and you're responsible not only to listen to the paid lobbyists of the trucking association, but you should also be listening to the public and those groups that represent the public when it comes to highway safety. The job of the Minister of Transportation is to listen to both sides.

I look forward to the legislation you will bring forward. I truly hope it addresses some of the issues that have been raised not only by the trucking association but by the public, and very much look forward to a time when we're able to start dealing with some of these issues. But I really wonder just how effective and comprehensive this policy is if you've only listened to one group of people, the paid lobbyists within the trucking association, and not the people of Ontario.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): I rise today to add my voice to the chorus of outraged citizens across the country in protest of the federal Young Offenders Act.

It seems almost every day I pick up the paper and read about some heinous crime being committed by a youth, who gets a ludicrous sentence. The federal government is sending a message to an entire generation of youth that

you can commit any crime, no matter how gravely serious it is, and society will not exact an appropriate penalty.

I have met people who have lost their children, brothers, sisters and friends to teen killers. These people have sat patiently through the legal process and gone through the revictimization of hearing accounts of the death of their loved ones gone over in the courts. They relive the crime because they want to see justice served, because they want the killer to pay for what he or she has done. However, they get no justice. All they get is insult added to grievous injury.

This government has long supported having young offenders tried in adult court for serious offences. Crimes like murder and rape should automatically go to adult court. These are adult crimes, and the offenders deserve an adult sentence.

I ask all the members of this House to urge the government of Canada to finally listen to their constituents and amend the Young Offenders Act: "Adult time for adult crime."

WATER CLEANUP

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Election campaigns produce strange occurrences. A press release with the Progressive Conservative letterhead was issued on Friday, May 23, ridiculing the investment of over \$2 million in federal funding for the environmental cleanup of Martindale Pond and the Royal Canadian Henley Rowing Course, a project that has received widespread support in St Catharines from people of all political persuasions.

Indeed, not only will environmental contaminants be removed from this well-used waterway, but the dredging taking place will enable St Catharines and Ontario to host the 1999 World Rowing Championships, an event certain to return millions of dollars on this wise investment.

It is hard to fathom why the Conservative Party would be so critical of such a beneficial initiative. Certainly Premier Harris and my colleagues the Conservative members for St Catharines-Brock and Lincoln must be shocked and surprised by this PC campaign salvo since the Conservative government of Ontario matched the initial federal funding of \$1.5 million, as did the council of the city of St Catharines.

Even committed Conservative partisans must be mystified that the federal Conservative campaign has decided to attack a splendid and progressive project which will help clean up a waterway, provide a habitat for fish and improve a world-class rowing course while creating jobs in our part of Ontario, a project which has brought together the federal, provincial and municipal governments, along with the private and volunteer sectors. Only Jean Charest's Conservatives appear to be offside in this play.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I hope all members of the House —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Wildman: Is this on my time?

The Speaker: No. I'll restart the clock for you, don't worry.

Order. It's statements, and we want to hear the one from the member for Algoma.

SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I hope all members of the House are aware that the Minister of Education and Training's so-called formula for determining the number of trustees in the new amalgamated school boards is not working. It's particularly problematic in northern Ontario, because in determining the number of trustees, the ministry staff are interpreting the instruction that they take into account scarcity of population as only to be applied in areas where boards actually tax.

That means in northern Ontario the vast expanses of crown land are not counted, even though in order to attend a meeting, a trustee would have to drive through these crown lands. So in Algoma district, district school board number 2 is counted by the ministry as only being 20,000-and-some square kilometres, instead of the real total of 72,000 square kilometres.

As a result, there will be no trustee north of Sault Ste Marie to represent Hornepayne, Chapleau, White River and Wawa. There will be five or six trustees in the city of Sault Ste Marie and a couple east of Sault Ste Marie, but none for that whole expanse of territory and those communities north of Sault Ste Marie.

This is just ridiculous, and the ministry staff says, "You've got four years after this election to campaign" —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements?

HEARING AWARENESS MONTH

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): May is Hearing Awareness Month, and I am proud to rise in the House today to acknowledge this very important occasion.

We all recognize that our population is aging, and this, along with the increase in noise pollution, has made hearing loss the fastest-growing disability in North America.

Often referred to as the invisible disability, hearing loss affects one in 10 Canadians. This incidence increases dramatically for people over the age of 65. In fact, more than 50% of our elderly experience some degree of hearing loss.

There are many misconceptions about sound and hearing loss. For instance, some people believe that hearing loss after sound exposure is temporary. This is not true. Some of the hearing loss will be permanent. Another misconception is that if you have a hearing loss already, you don't have to protect against hearing loss any more. This is not true either. Hearing loss accumulates. More exposure to loud sounds leads to more hearing loss.

Communication barriers can be significantly reduced through the use of technology like interpreters, notetakers, closed captioning and assistive devices, but it's noted by the Canadian Hearing Society that increased understanding and awareness lie at the heart of lifting these barriers.

The Ministry of Health provides funding for hearing aids for children and adults through the assistive devices program. Anyone who requires the use of a hearing aid for six months or more is eligible.

Once hearing loss occurs, it cannot be recovered. We need to remember this in our day-to-day activities so that protection and awareness become a fact of life.

1350

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I saw him here a moment ago.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): If you ask the question, I think he'll hear you.

Mr Cordiano: He's everywhere, is he?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): He's ubiquitous.

Mr Cordiano: He's ubiquitous, yes.

Minister, I want to talk today about your MVA property tax scheme, which you renamed CVA, current value assessment. We know that many people across this province are going to see dramatic increases in their property taxes. In some cases taxes will more than double. We also know there will be a massive shift in business taxes from bank towers to small businesses such as barber shops and hair salons. In fact, some reports suggest that businesses will be facing 200% increases. That will force many small operators out of business. You are going to be responsible for that. Will you today stand up and guarantee to small business that they will not be put under as a result of your property tax increases?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'll refer the question to the Chair of Management Board.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): As we indicated before, this is a bill that comes under the responsibility of the Minister of Finance, not the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

I will state the obvious, in that an updated assessment does not generate more revenue; it simply makes it more fair in terms of what each individual taxpayer pays, whether that taxpayer is a residential homeowner, whether it's a business — a big business, a small business — commercial, industrial. No matter what the class is, it raises the same amount of money but apportions it more fairly.

Municipalities have been given all sorts of tools to assist the elderly, to assist the disabled, to phase in any increases, to ensure that there aren't big increases and to ensure that not only will people have fair taxes but they will have affordable taxes.

Mr Cordiano: The reality is that you're transferring a massive tax burden from big business to small business. You're telling municipalities to come up with an extra \$1.6 billion that they lost through the business occupancy tax, and if small businesses can't afford to pay, you're

telling them they should blame the municipalities: "Don't blame the province."

Your government is playing games with the public. Not only are you shifting responsibility, you're also shifting the blame. And that's not the only game you're playing, because you're still downloading over \$700 million in responsibilities such as social housing on to the backs of municipal taxpayers. How are taxpayers going to cope with these huge increases? How are they going to know which part of their tax increase is downloading and which part is from your municipal tax scheme?

Hon David Johnson: It's our position that there won't be any tax increase, and I believe that will be the situation. Indeed, the members of the transition team here in Metropolitan Toronto for example have already discussed that and set as a goal that there would not be any property tax increase. Bear in mind that the education tax, which is largely on the property tax now, is being shifted to the province of Ontario, so there's a great burden that —

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): That's not true, not any more.

Hon David Johnson: Not all of it, but there is a great burden being taken off for education on to the provincial income taxes.

Further, Bill 106 calls for the elimination of the business occupancy tax, which business has been asking to have eliminated for many years. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has requested the elimination. Through this bill, we are eliminating that and taking that burden off the business community in Ontario.

Mr Cordiano: It's very clear that what you've achieved through your MVA, AVA, CVA or BSA plan is total confusion.

The Speaker: With the greatest respect, "BSA" has connotations that are certainly out of order. I ask you to withdraw it.

Mr Cordiano: I was referring to a broadly based scheme, assessment plan, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: In future if you could say "broadly based scheme," I'd appreciate it.

Mr Cordiano: Call it what you want, it's all the same. It's mass confusion.

We know municipalities have no idea how they're going to deal with the \$1.6 billion in revenue lost through the elimination of the business occupancy tax. We know that downloading social housing and social services on to municipalities will also cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, \$350 million to Metro property taxpayers alone. We know also that as a result of mega-city, property taxes will go up. But what we don't know and what you're not telling the public is how municipalities and municipal property taxpayers will cope with this additional burden.

The Speaker: Thank you, member for Lawrence. Your time is up.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Lawrence, come to order, please.

Hon David Johnson: I can tell you how the city of Brampton is going to cope with it. The city of Brampton,

in a press release I have, has announced a tax decrease, the first tax decrease.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Fort York. Minister?

Hon David Johnson: I find it interesting, and I'm trying to recall: Who introduced the commercial concentration tax? Which party was it that introduced the commercial concentration tax in Ontario? I notice there's quiet from the Liberal ranks. If there was one tax, one adjustment to the property tax system in Ontario, that was reviled by the business community that the member opposite professes to support today, it was the commercial concentration tax. It's a credit to the NDP government that they undid that damage.

We have gone through a process of —

The Speaker: Sorry. Thanks. Time's up. New question, official opposition.

Interjections.

The Speaker: New question.
Member for Algoma.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, you have the floor.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'll yield to my friend.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'll tell you something: I've done it; the government has had the same situation. I called it twice. I looked. I waited. No one stood. The member for Algoma stood. I called him. If the member for Algoma hadn't stood, I would have gone to the government side. I looked back here. Yes, I did.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was waiting for the applause to subside from that side of the House. As it did, I rose. That's when I stood up and you looked this way.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Government members, come to order, please. Member for Dufferin-Peel.

You can take your seat now. I appreciate the fact that you may have been confused, but when I called for an opposition question, I called very clearly twice. I know I looked over here and I waited for someone to stand, and you didn't. Now, I really appreciate that you've lost your question. All I can tell you is that in the future you have to be a little more cognizant, I guess. I tried my best and twice I called it.

Mr Wildman: Would it be in order for me to yield to him and move to me after?

The Speaker: You can seek unanimous consent to go back, if you like.

Mr Wildman: I seek unanimous consent to allow the member for Hamilton East to ask a question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I have to ask for it before you need say no. The member for Algoma is asking for unanimous consent to go back to the member for Hamilton East for a leader's question. Agreed? Agreed. Member for Hamilton East.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I guess I'll have to be kinder with the

question now. I appreciate the members across the floor and the NDP members.

My question is to the Minister of Health. There is grave concern with regard to the level of ambulance service across Ontario. There is grave concern across this province as to the impact that your cuts are having on the delivery of emergency ambulance service across this province. We have seen cuts of over \$40 million in the last two years both in ambulance operations and municipal ambulance transfer funds.

Two particular examples in my own community in the last week bring this to mind: A 64-year-old woman faints, hurts herself on the way down and is bleeding. Her husband calls an ambulance; 40 minutes before an ambulance appears at the door. A seven-year-old boy, broken leg, waiting to be transferred from one hospital to another; seven and a half hours to be transferred, after repeated calls by the staff to the dispatchers to get an ambulance. In both cases we were told that because of the shortage of funds, they don't have the ambulances available.

Minister, is it acceptable in Ontario today for someone to wait seven and a half hours to be transferred with a broken leg, or someone bleeding who —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for Hamilton East.

1400

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I'm disturbed by the honourable member's suggestion with respect to emergency transfers. Ontario has an excellent record across the province, including in Hamilton. We've not cut one penny; in fact, we put \$25 million in. I just received an award recently from the ambulance associations for the fact that we'll now have paramedic training across the province in 99% of our ambulances and for the defibrillation —

Interjection.

Hon Mr Wilson: No, it wasn't — for the defibrillation and medications that the ambulances are carrying with them. No one else in Canada has a better ambulance service than Ontario. There are problems in Hamilton with respect to bypasses occurring, in terms of volume problems at the emergency rooms, but my understanding is the ambulances are operating very well.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): Minister, I am really concerned. I was stunned when I read an article I just received today by fax that rural people are going to be considered second-class citizens. You have supported the Ontario patient transfer services. We know you are forcing the municipalities to take over the ambulance services. We know the municipalities are going to be right up to their necks in debt as of next year. There will not be any tax decrease; there will be a municipal tax increase.

Looking at this, it's going to cost a rural patient, to be transferred to a hospital, anywhere from \$103 to \$110 for the pickup and then \$1.25 per kilometre and \$50 for —

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Lalonde: Minister, can you assure the people of Ontario that the Americanization of the Ontario ambulance services will not continue —

The Speaker: Thank you very much, member.

Hon Mr Wilson: The largest ambulance service and one of the best in North America is run by a municipality called Metro Toronto, as are dozens of other municipal ambulance services in this province. Every ambulance service, whether it's the private sector, the municipality or another entity, including the 10 the Ministry of Health operates, signs operating agreements. The Ambulance Act will not change under the Who Does What legislation. I firmly believe you may even see more attention to the rural problems with respect to transportation, because now local politicians, who are right there every day when it's snowing and it's raining and it's difficult to get around, will be having direct input, in fact taking money from the property tax to pay for those service agreements, and they can build in higher service requirements than are now required in the province if they choose to do that. They certainly have enough tax room to do that.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Three Niagara men, including a St Catharines teacher, were seriously injured in a two-car collision Saturday night in Lincoln. In one of the cars all three of the occupants and the driver had to be extricated with hydraulic equipment. "One of the five responding ambulances had to be called in from Hamilton because of a shortage in the area, said Constable Cliff Priest, one of the Niagara Regional Police officers on the scene."

In light of the fact that in the existing situation you have a shortage of ambulances available and a problem now at emergency centres where people have to go to a critical bypass — that is, they can't get into the hospital — how the heck do you expect municipalities, outside of the large ones such as Metropolitan Toronto, to be able to handle the downloading of ambulance services? Are we really going to see now the invasion of huge American companies providing this service, at a huge increase, without the same kind of care and attitude we've had in Ontario over the years?

Hon Mr Wilson: No. The law will not change one iota with respect to the ambulance standards, which are the best in Canada, the best services available in Canada. If there's a problem in a particular area, the dispatch centres — we have the best dispatch centres in Canada. In fact, they are the envy of North America and of US firms that come up here and look at our dispatch centres. They will remain in the hands of the province.

If there's a particular situation where there may need some beefing up of services, we'd be happy to look at that. But we have the best ambulance services, the best-equipped ambulance services, including our air ambulance services, which are the envy of the world.

EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question of the Minister of Education and Training: Bill 104 received third reading in this House five weeks ago today. Forty-five days have gone by and there still is no Education Improvement Commission. Beyond the initial naming of the two chairs, we've seen no announcement of appointments.

On April 2, the minister said in this House, "If the members of the third party would allow us to get Bill 104 through the House, we'll have an EIC," that is, an education improvement commission. Even if cabinet approved a list of appointments today, it will take some time for the commission to be up and running. Why did this government ram through Bill 104 only to hold up the process of appointing the commission?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I'd like to point out to the member for Algoma that he's wrong on two counts: (1) The government did not "ram through" Bill 104 and (2) the government is not holding up appointments to the Education Improvement Commission. In fact, we're looking forward to going forward with that commission, to having it fulfil its mandate as contained in the legislation.

Mr Wildman: It has taken five weeks. The appointments, if they are going to go forward, will still have to go through a committee process. Meanwhile, boards of education and separate boards in this province have not been able to proceed with capital projects and other contracts to be signed. We've heard from school boards that they cannot get bond holders to issue debentures for capital projects because there is no Education Improvement Commission to give approval.

If we have children returning to overcrowded schools next fall because of your five-week delay in making appointments to this commission, how will you justify that to the ratepayers and to the parents of Ontario students?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I can assure the member for Algoma that the Education Improvement Commission will be up and running within the time frame necessary to approve the budgets and programs during this transition period. We have of course retained the co-chairs, and I'm very pleased that we have two very experienced people, Dave Cooke and Ann Vanstone, who are working right now with a staff and have already provided this government with some information it has accepted. I know the member opposite knows that those recommendations, as they relate to northern boards, have made some improvements.

The transition is moving very quickly and I think very smoothly. I can assure the member opposite that there are no building projects, as they were proposed, as we have promised to fund — \$650 million worth of funding — that will be delayed by this process. If those projects are going forward according to their plan, if there aren't any changes, there should be no problem in building those schools and having them ready for our students.

Mr Wildman: The government's falling down on the job. You've left school boards with unanswered questions about how to proceed with amalgamation. You've left boards unable to proceed on capital projects. You've left them waiting to get approval for their budgets as they've struggled to pass those budgets despite your cutbacks.

The minister has created a crisis. There are only seven months left for school boards and the Education Improvement Commission to work out amalgamation. At the same time the minister is turning the curriculum upside down from grades 1 to 9. He's bringing in high school reform that no one is clear about. He's creating chaos in the education system.

How can the minister justify this delay and his lack of action? How can he justify his performance as minister in this regard?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Let me tell the member for Algoma very directly: First, let's be clear, the Education Improvement Commission co-chairs have already released draft guidelines, and we are working as quickly as possible to help those school boards during this time of transition.

How do I defend my actions? Very interesting. I think we can answer that very directly. We are moving on several fronts. We're moving to get a curriculum that has clear standards, written in plain English so that students and parents and teachers will understand what's expected of students at every step along the way in their education. We are moving to reduce the cost of bureaucracy in education. We're moving quickly to do that. We're changing to a funding system where there won't be second-class students in this province by virtue of not having enough money to ensure a high quality of education.

Why are we doing all of that all at once? Because, sir, your government did not. Because Ontario is one of the last provinces in Canada to take on this kind of restructuring, and that is why our students are mired in mediocre performance. We won't tolerate it. That's why we're moving forward, moving forward right now.

1410

PROTECTION OF JOBS

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Premier. The Premier might know that in Sudbury for about three years now Inco has been developing a new high-tech nickel phone battery for a very fast-growing consumer market. This project has meant high-quality jobs for technicians, technologists and process workers. In 1994 the northern Ontario heritage fund awarded a \$12-million loan to Inco to help launch the project. It was the largest single investment the heritage fund has ever made. Today we learned that Inco wants to move this entire project to Clydach, Wales. Premier, my question is very simply, what are you going to do to keep those jobs in Sudbury?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I am not aware that Inco is proposing to move the jobs or the technology or the process to Wales. I'd be glad to look into it. I don't know on what terms you gave the money, whether it was conditional that should they leave, they had to repay the money, but if you were that judicious, we'd be prepared to look at that.

Mr Laughren: I would remind you that Inco last year made \$642 million and over the years it has made literally billions from exploiting the resources of the Sudbury basin. The technology we're talking about is exactly the kind northern Ontario needs in order to diversify its economy. Don't you think that when a company becomes as rich and powerful as Inco has become, the corporation has an obligation to provide opportunities for the people whence it derived its riches?

Hon Mr Harris: I suppose if they're making that much money, it begs the question why your government felt compelled to give them \$12 million. Second, if you

are now telling me, and you would know the conditions, that the \$12 million was given without conditions, then I suppose legally there may be nothing we can do to compel a company to stay.

But listen, we are always concerned when any private sector company chooses any jurisdiction in the world other than Ontario. It's why we are striving to cut the taxes you hiked on top of the taxes the Liberals hiked. It's why we are striving to bring balanced labour legislation. It's why we are striving to make this province more competitive. But we will take a look — I appreciate the member raising it — and see if there are any avenues open to us in any of the agreements former governments have made with them that might help leverage keeping jobs —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much. Final supplementary.

Mr Laughren: I would remind the Premier that this was a loan, it was not a grant, and you would want to know as well that the threat to move this technology and the jobs out of Sudbury was uncovered and announced today by the former member for Sudbury East and the soon-to-be federal MP for Nickel Belt, Mr Elie Martel. This is what Mr Martel had to say about the situation —

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Boy, are we grasping. He's in deep trouble.

The Speaker: Minister of Agriculture, come to order, please.

Mr Laughren: This is what Mr Martel said today at a press conference: "The nickel is here, not in Wales. The jobs should be here, not in Wales."

My question once again to the Premier is very simple: What are you going to do to keep those jobs here in Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: We will continue to clean up the mess you left in making Ontario an attractive jurisdiction to do business, and we will look at whether there are any agreements in place as a condition of throwing this money at a company like Inco, which your government did, whether there are any conditions there, when you loan money or give them money or give them concessions, where you are able to attach anything to the technology. We'd be prepared to look into all that.

I would say this: You quote the former member for Nickel Belt currently, I guess, because the question has been raised in a tight race in the federal election. It was his long-standing policy and yours to nationalize Inco. You had the chance for five years and you did nothing.

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): My question is to the Solicitor General. Minister, when your government was considering the introduction of VLTs, video lottery terminals, last year you were in possession of the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario report, Gambling in Ontario: Current Enforcement Concerns. You denied us access to that report not only as members of this Legislature in Ontario but also as this Legislature's committee on administration of justice.

Subsequent to that and during that demand, bits and pieces of this report were leaked to the opposition and the public. You were concerned about that and an investigation was initiated. Could you today give us the status of that investigation and when you consider it would be wound up?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): No investigation was initiated by the government or by the Ministry of the Solicitor General. I believe at the time the head of CISO, Chief Julian Fantino of London, indicated his grave concern with respect to the leakage of a confidential intelligence report which was supposed to be confined to the policing community. I would suggest the member contact Chief Fantino with respect to the progress of that investigation.

Mr Ramsay: Minister, are you saying to me today you have no knowledge of this investigation and its progress to this date? Do you not have any suspicion that maybe it was the intelligence unit itself that released this report with the approval of Chief Fantino?

Hon Mr Runciman: I'm not going to speculate on that. As a minister of the crown it's not appropriate for me or any other member of the executive council to be involved in the details of any police investigation. I respect that and I have not asked Chief Fantino or any other member of the CISO organization any questions related to a police investigation.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Health. This morning I attended with my colleague from Fort York a rally about the future of Doctors Hospital. This is a hospital, as you know, that serves primarily the west end of Metropolitan Toronto and serves a very multicultural population in a multitude of languages. It's a community-based hospital and its future is threatened by your actions and those of the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

This morning the slogan they used was, "Take the bricks, not the mix." They're saying by this that they're not objecting to the move of the hospital to the western wing of the Toronto Hospital, but they are very clearly saying and the whole community is saying, including the earlier commission that looked at this, the district health council, that what you should do is to maintain the integrity of the hospital, maintain it intact by keeping the present governance structure. They have shown you how that will save money and how that will maintain, most important of all, the uniqueness of this hospital that will continue to have, if you allow it, as its primary function that community-based health care.

Minister, will you ensure that Doctors Hospital continues to exist? Not the bricks and mortar, but the institution.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I saw one of the flyers that was being passed out today and certainly the sentiment there is, as the honourable member has described it, the same sentiment the government has expressed throughout restructuring; that is, the services are to be maintained and enhanced where they need to be

enhanced, very valuable services that the staff at Doctors Hospital provide to a wide range of groups in our society, often in their first languages, with the cultural sensitivities that the patients need in order to do well in their journey through our health care system.

The commission will make the final determination. In the public pronouncements I've heard from the commission, they're very sensitive to the valuable role of the services provided by the people at Doctors Hospital.

1420

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): You appear to be saying that services will be maintained and that you think the commission will keep that promise, or at least respect the cultural linguistic services that are there. We're worried. That's why they've been chanting, "Take the bricks but keep the mix." They're worried because they're afraid the commissioner is not going to say Doctors Hospital needs its own independent board at Toronto Western. That's what they're worried about.

The question to you is this: In the event that this restructuring committee, through the commission, fails to heed the advice of all the linguistic communities out there — the Chinese, the Italian, Portuguese, Vietnamese and Spanish communities — will you intervene, as the boss of the health care system?

Hon Mr Wilson: The mandate of the commission is very clear. Of their top three priorities, at the top of the list is accessibility to services, maintaining and enhancing services. As you know, in both the DHC report and the Health Services Restructuring Commission report, they made it abundantly clear that the commission itself and its members are committed to those cultural sensitivities and to providing those services.

Their agenda is what everyone in the health care system agrees about, including those who were out in front of the commission this morning, and that is that our eye has to be on maintaining and enhancing services. I remind the honourable member that I hope he made his submission to the commission, as appropriate, because the commission will make the final determination.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is for the Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for privatization and relates to the recently announced privatization review framework. In communicating the framework, the minister pointed out that while in the past there may have been a need for government involvement in a wide array of tasks, that same level of involvement may not be appropriate or required today. I'd like to ask the minister to please elaborate on this point so my constituents may better understand the purpose of the privatization review.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): It's important to understand that times have changed since the time when governments got involved in many of the businesses they run. Governments are currently running various businesses throughout their ministries. I think it's appropriate for Ontarians that we take a look at the changing times and changing needs and changing priorities of Ontarians, and the demands of

taxpayers nowadays, who are far more attuned to making sure there is value for the money we are taking from them and spending on their behalf. The framework we've established will make sure that we can perform that assessment and that analysis, to understand very clearly whether or not there are ways in which private sector involvement in public sector activities can help out.

Mr Hardeman: I'd like to ask the minister specifically about the Province of Ontario Savings Office, which has been announced as a candidate for review under the privatization review framework. I have a savings office in my riding, and consequently one of my constituents recently contacted me regarding the fact that it had been referred to your office. My constituent has requested that I ask the minister whether the government plans to sell the Ontario savings offices, and why. I'd like the minister to answer the question, to assist me in answering my constituents.

Hon Mr Sampson: It's quite important to understand that part of the assessment of the privatization framework is an assessment of a range of options, which could include the sale of an asset, could include a franchising partnership with the private sector providers. There are a number of alternatives we could look at, and we will look at, when we take a look at assets such as the Province of Ontario Savings Office.

I want to assure the member that there are no predetermined plans as to which option will work best. That's why we are doing this assessment. That's indeed why we have designed the framework so that the candidates will get a fair assessment of what the appropriate relationship and what the appropriate involvement of the private sector should be in public sector activities.

There is certainly a question that has got to be answered, and that is whether government, given the nature of financial institutions in this province and in this country, should be involved in the business of running a bank. That's indeed the question we hope to get an answer to.

ONTARIO'S CREDIT RATING

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier. Today, you will be aware that the highly respected credit rating agency, Standard and Poor's, issued a discouraging report card on the Harris government. We now are two years into your government, and Standard and Poor's has refused to upgrade the province's credit rating. You will know that in 1990 Ontario had a AAA credit rating; it was downgraded three times over the last period of time, and each time I remember well your yelling at Bob Rae about how disappointing and discouraging that was. We now find that Standard and Poor's, after watching you in action for two years and looking at your plans for the future, gives you exactly the same credit rating as Bob Rae.

If you said Bob Rae was mismanaging the finances of the province because he got a AA- rating, shouldn't the people of Ontario naturally conclude that your rating is AA- and therefore you are mismanaging the finances of the province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No.

Mr Phillips: I think the people will take the word of an independent, highly regarded, respected credit rating agency called Standard and Poor's, whose business it is to coldly and objectively look at the way you are managing the finances of the province. That is what they are paid for, and they are concluding that you are mismanaging the finances of the province. They are refusing to upgrade the credit rating of the province, a AA-, the same rating Premier Rae had.

They go on to say that revenue pressures associated with your tax cut are one of the reasons they are refusing to increase the credit rating. They go on to say that in 1998, three and a half years into your mandate, Ontario will have the highest debt-to-revenue ratio among all the Canadian provinces. They go on to say that this rating they are giving anticipates good economic growth. If that doesn't happen, that rating will be at risk.

My question to you again is this: Recognizing that a respected credit rating agency, Standard and Poor's, has indicated to you their concern, will you now listen to a group like them who are telling you that your tax cut is putting Ontario's fiscal house at risk?

Hon Mr Harris: No.

WATER AND SEWER SERVICES

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Environment. Tomorrow, a conference called Water and Waste Water Treatment in Canada will open about two blocks north of here, and it's all about privatizing our water. As a matter of fact, the conference is sponsored by the Center for Business Intelligence, of Burlington, Massachusetts, and will bring municipal leaders and corporations together to talk about privatization. The corporations are paying \$1,700 for the privilege of attending this conference.

On Monday, your government passed Bill 107, which has to do with downloading sewer and water services and ultimately their privatization. Will you today, before the people at this conference get too excited about the possibility of making money out of our water, make a statement in this Legislature indicating that the privatization of Ontario's water supply is not in the public interest and that you will take measures to stop it?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): As I indicated yesterday to another honourable member, water and sewage services in the province of Ontario have remained in public hands for a period of 100 years. There's no indication that's going to change. Municipalities are totally in charge of this. They are fully autonomous levels of government that tax their citizens to pay for these services. They own these services. Therefore perhaps the member opposite should be asking them the very same question.

1430

Mr Laughren: That's a rather disingenuous response, I say to the minister. If Bill 107 had nothing to do with privatization, do you think it's just a coincidence that these companies are flocking to Toronto to talk about the privatization of water? Do you really think that's just a coincidence?

When you are squeezing the municipalities, that makes sewer and water services easy pickings for the private

sector. You know what happened in Britain, at least you should, when they privatized the water services there. Now your member for London South, Mr Wood, is heading up a workshop at that privatization conference entitled Privatization and Contracting Out: A Political Perspective. So don't tell me that Bill 107 has nothing to do with the privatization of water. It sure as hell does.

If your government is not in favour of private water, why are these companies flocking to Toronto and why will you not make a statement saying that it's not in the public interest and you will stop it?

Hon Mr Sterling: Toronto is a wonderful convention city. It's a place where conventions from all across North America, in fact North and South America, come to have meetings. There are meetings with regard to different water associations. There was one in London three or four weeks ago. There are all kinds of meetings like these particular meetings going on. I put no emphasis on whether they're meeting in Toronto at this time or in the future on the basis of what is happening here in Canada or in Ontario.

Bill 107, as you well know, is the first time any provincial government has made a stand with regard to discouraging privatization of our water system. As you know from that bill, what it says is that if a municipality should choose to privatize, they would have to pay back to the government all the grants they had received since 1978. What did your government do with regard to this matter?

ONTARIO FILM INDUSTRY

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. In the last budget the finance minister introduced 20 new tax credits, including an enhancement to the Ontario film and television tax credit which was introduced in last year's budget. Minister, why have you chosen to enhance a tax credit that is already existing and how is this going to help our film industry in Ontario?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Thank you to the honourable member for St Andrew-St Patrick for an excellent question. As I said in the House prior to the break, our moves in this sector really reflect our commitment to doing business differently. Lower taxes encourage investment — we know that — investment equals production — we know that — and more production means more jobs. This is the best thing we can do in this particular industry. They know how to compete and they are successful. Our job is to create a positive environment for growth in this sector and then get out of the way.

Ms Bassett: In a follow-up to that, I'd like to ask how these tax credits compete with those in other provinces. As you know, a lot in the film industry are like gypsies: They pick up and move where there are tax credits. As you pointed out, we depend on this industry for jobs. Could you just say how we compete with other provinces?

Hon Ms Mushinski: We have certainly identified cultural industries as a core business of my ministry. We expect that the tax credit enhancement that was announc-

ed by Mr Eves will result in significant economic benefits, including stimulating an additional \$72 million a year in film and television production. More important, the increased activity will allow Ontario's best and most creative talent to stay and work in Ontario; we believe it will create the most competitive environment in North America. Hollywood is going to become known as Toronto South instead of Toronto as Hollywood North.

Elizabeth McDonald, who is the president and CEO of the Canadian Film and Television Production Association, said that Ontario, in particular Toronto, is the largest film and television production centre in Canada. There's no doubt that the tax credit will stimulate jobs —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Next question, official opposition.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I'm particularly glad to be able to ask it with the Premier present, because we want to know what the minister is hiding. The minister has not explained to the public or to this House the implications of a very expensive doctor deal that came after a year of his mistreating doctors in this province, a deal that's estimated to cost \$660 million.

Minister, when I asked your ministry for a briefing on this, I was referred to your office. After 14 calls to your executive assistant, not one of which has been returned, we still don't have a briefing. I called your deputy minister twice personally, and nothing has been returned.

The people of this province want to know what you're hiding. They want to know why you won't discuss how this deal — that came about, I'll remind you, because of your bungling of the issue the last 12 months — is going to be paid for. Who is going to pay for it? The patients of Ontario? The nurses of Ontario? Who is going to cover up for you, Minister? Will you stand in your place today and agree to table all the details of this deal, including how it's going to be paid for?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member has made several calls. I'm aware of all of them. He has insisted that only one person can brief him; that's my executive assistant. She is swamped. We've offered everybody else in the bureaucracy, including people who were at the table, to brief the honourable member, and he has declined. Let's get the record straight here.

Second, I have been scrummed on this issue dozens of times. I have given dozens of interviews. I've been on TV with this issue. The only reporter accusing me of not is Jane Armstrong, and I wasn't in the country last week so I couldn't return her call. I have been very forthright; this government is very forthright.

The unratified agreement — it is not ratified; so the tentative agreement — is available to anyone who wants a copy of it. You know that, honourable member, so stop spreading this misinformation in the province.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Health, that's unparliamentary, and I ask you to withdraw it.

Hon Mr Wilson: I withdraw it.

Mr Kennedy: I will not stoop to the language used by the minister, but I will say a lot of people are wondering why the minister will not answer questions. There are 10,000 people at Doctors Hospital. There is a symbol here, a brick, that I would like to make sure the minister gets today, that talks about their not understanding you not answering the questions.

In estimates, in the information we have been able to get —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Just a minute, member for York South.

Mr Kennedy: There is a question I want the minister to answer. On page 71 of the detailed estimates, there's \$435 million cut from hospitals. On page 87, there's \$242 million added to pay to doctors.

Minister, your deal is going to cost even more than that. Do you not agree that you're taking away from nurses because of your mismanagement, from basic care, from emergency services we heard about today, from Doctors Hospital, to be able to pay the doctors' deal? Will you tell us also today, since you've offered to answer the question, I'll remind you, how you will make up for the \$203-million shortfall in what you've put in the budget and what you've actually done? By the way, Minister, this is for you and the Premier to be reminded about some of the shortfalls.

1440

Hon Mr Wilson: I met with the Ontario Nurses' Association this morning, and they had some of the same thoughts the honourable member had. I was able to explain to them that after many years the agreement finally recognizes what the doctors have been saying all along, and that is that we have to recognize the growth and aging of the population. We've done that at 1.5% a year for the next three years.

It's not more money for individual doctors. Their fees will be exactly the same the day after the agreement as they are today. It is simply allowing them to serve more patients and older patients. If you're suggesting — because you're all over the map on this issue, typical of you and your party — that we should lock the doors at a certain period during the day because there's no more money for patients and we shouldn't recognize growth and aging of the population, get up and say that.

Otherwise, support and help this deal to be ratified so we can get on to reforming the health care system, to restructuring it, to finding every dollar through getting rid of the duplication and waste in the system and driving that money to pay for more patients and an aging population. That is needed, whether the honourable member wants to recognize those facts or not.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We can wait.

New question, the member for Algoma.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training. Is the minister aware that his commitment to take into account scarcity of population in rural and northern boards, as well as the

size of population — that is, the distribution — is not being properly implemented by his ministry staff? In proposed district school board 2, the area being counted by the ministry for determining the number of trustees is only the area taxed by the existing board, an area a little over 20,000 square kilometres, instead of counting the whole area of the district board, which is about 72,000 square kilometres. In other words, the crown land is not counted, despite the fact that a trustee would have to travel through that crown land to get to the community where the meeting is to be held.

Why is it that as a result of this, none of the communities north of Sault Ste Marie — Wawa, Chapleau, White River or Hornepayne — will have any trustee representation under your formula?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I am pleased to inform the member for Algoma that we have sent out distribution formulas; we have provided those to the boards. If a board has an unorganized territory, like crown land, in their jurisdiction, it's the obligation of the board to treat that land like a municipality. Distribution is the responsibility of both the local education improvement commission and the municipal clerks. Those unorganized lands, the crown territories, will be taken into account and must be taken into account under the directions we've given boards and the municipal clerks and the local improvement commissions.

Mr Wildman: Part of this problem relates to the fact that the minister agreed with the recommendation of the Education Improvement Commission, the designated co-chairs, to put Hornepayne into district school board 2, even though that community did not wish to be put in that board and none of the existing boards believe it makes sense to add another 120-mile round trip to the travelling that will be required to get to the end of the area of jurisdiction they're responsible for.

But the point is this: The minister made a commitment, which I believe to be sincere, that scarcity of population would be taken into account in determining the numbers of trustees. As a result of this decision by your ministry staff and the meetings that have been held between local officials and the ministry staff, the ministry staff agrees there will no representation north of Sault Ste Marie. Their only response is that the communities can lobby for the next four years so that in the election after this year's they might get some trustee representation. Why won't you change it now?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I hope that the member for Algoma didn't hit himself as he passed himself in his earlier argument that the Education Improvement Commission transition process is not under way. It clearly is under way, and yes, we have received a report by the co-chairs of the Education Improvement Commission and we have acted on that to increase the amount of representation, to increase the number of boards, the number of trustees in the north because we've recognized the case for the north, the case for more representation. We've moved on that and moved very quickly.

Let me restate this for the member opposite: The distribution formula we have distributed to the boards recognizes low-density areas and ensures that these areas

receive trustee representation. Just once more for the record, it is the obligation of the municipal clerks and the local Education Improvement Commission to identify those low-population areas and to have trustees represent those areas. That is being taking care of. It's in the distribution formula that we have presented, and I can assure the member that this is an improvement on what was first proposed and those people —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

AGRIFOOD EXPORTS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): My question is for the minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. It's a well-known fact that agriculture is the engine that drives the province of Ontario. The province does well when the agricultural sector is doing well.

My riding of Perth has a strong agricultural base. Perth ranks first in hogs marketed in Ontario and second in milk shipped. Perth county has a farming population of a little over 10,000 people and they account for over 6% of the livestock and poultry sold in Ontario. That's over \$150 million a year. The farmers of Perth want to see their industry grow and expand.

We as a government are placing a high priority on expanding our agrifood exports. Increased exports not only benefit the agrifood sector but they also create jobs. This is what is important to the people of the riding of Perth. Could the minister please update us on how our export development is progressing?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I wish to thank the honourable member for Perth for his question. I certainly want to advise my colleagues in all sides of the House that we're very pleased to say we had \$5.3 billion of agrifood exports in this past calendar year. The government is committed to boosting the agrifood exports with measures like the Grow Ontario program, the sales tax rebate on capital construction, indeed the rural jobs strategy.

It's very important, and a lot of people don't realize that for every \$1 billion of exports in the agrifood sector, 15,000 new jobs are created. Last night the Ontario Cattlemen's Association invited me to meet some beef importers from Korea. They tasted some of the best beef that's produced anywhere in Canada.

Mr Bert Johnson: Farmers in my riding have listened to 10 years of rhetoric from the other parties that were in government. For years they have been asking for a government that would act on their behalf. I am aware that the Minister of Agriculture has been acting for the farmers of Ontario. He has been taking part in trade missions in an effort to sell our top-quality Ontario agrifood products. I'd like to know if the minister had any — pardon the pun — feedback as a result of his efforts.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: As a matter of fact, I am proud to say I accompanied the Team Canada group to Asia and indeed we are exporting considerably more of our agrifood products to Asia. It was an honour to join the Honourable Ralph Goodale, at his invitation, to attend and to sell Ontario produce. When Ontario agriculture prospers, all Ontarians benefit.

PETITIONS

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS AUX HÔPITAUX

M. Gilles E. Morin (Carleton-Est) : «À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que la recommandation de la Commission de restructuration des soins de santé en Ontario ordonne la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort et que cette décision constitue le rejet de la volonté de l'entière communauté francophone de la province et de la communauté de l'est ;

«Attendu que 40 % des francophones de la province de l'Ontario résident dans l'aire de service de l'hôpital Montfort, soit à l'est de l'Ontario, où la population connaît un des plus hauts taux de croissance de toute la province, que le comté de Russell n'a pas d'hôpital et qu'en plus, Montfort dessert le nord le l'Ontario, où le nombre de francophones est très élevé ;

«Attendu que la fermeture de Montfort éloigne et diminue grandement l'accessibilité à une salle d'urgences pour plus de 150 000 personnes ;

«Attendu que Montfort est le seul hôpital d'enseignement et de formation des professionnels de la santé en français en Ontario et que la fermeture du seul hôpital spécialisé, offrant une gamme complète des services en français, mènera à la dilution et, éventuellement, à la disparition des services de santé en français en Ontario ;

«Attendu que l'on fait disparaître l'hôpital qui a un des meilleurs rendements de la province et qui, pour fins de comparaison, constitue l'exemple de choix du ministère de la Santé ;

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons que le premier ministre de la province intervienne fermement auprès de la Commission de restructuration des services de santé en Ontario afin que soit préservé l'emplacement actuel de l'hôpital et que soient consolidés la vocation, le mandat et le rôle essentiel que joue Montfort auprès de sa communauté.»

Il me fait plaisir d'ajouter ma signature à cette pétition.

1450

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a petition signed by some 10,000 people concerned about this government's management of health care, and it's to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, strongly support the preservation of the high-quality, affordable and accessible community health care by Doctors Hospital to Toronto's central west-end community. The Doctors Hospital must be retained to manage its distinct ambulatory and community health programs and to continue its 100-year role in listening to and serving the health needs of this diverse community."

It is with great pleasure that I add my name to the hundreds, actually the 10,000, who have signed this petition to the government.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm pleased to present a petition which reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, strongly support the preservation of the high-quality, affordable and accessible community

health care by Doctors Hospital to Toronto's central west-end community. The Doctors Hospital must be retained to manage its distinct ambulatory and community health programs and to continue its 100-year role in listening to and serving the health needs of this diverse community."

This is signed by several hundred people.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I have a petition signed by many residents in my riding who are opposed to the granting of a certificate of approval for a waste disposal site processing facility at 97 Frid Street, for several reasons, which I won't read.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I've got a petition from 300 or 400 people here in support of Doctors Hospital. It reads:

"We, the undersigned, strongly support the preservation of the high-quality, affordable and accessible community health care by Doctors Hospital to Toronto's central west-end community. The Doctors Hospital must be retained to manage its distinct ambulatory and community health programs and to continue its 100-year role in listening to and serving the health needs of this diverse community."

I affix my signature to this petition.

NON-TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The resolution is:

"Physicians should have the right to prescribe safe, alternative and complementary treatments without fear of being disciplined by the CPSO."

This petition is signed by several constituents from the Athens area and I present it on behalf of the Honourable Bob Runciman.

TVONTARIO

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVOntario is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVOntario continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that TVOntario continues to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I've also signed the petition.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Canadian Parents for French recognizes and supports English and French as Canada's two official languages and believes that young Canadians should have opportunities to become proficient in both languages;

"Whereas in recent years the members of CPF chapters have become increasingly concerned about annual budget meetings in which funding for French immersion transportation and quite possibly the program itself has come under scrutiny by school board trustees;

"Therefore, in an attempt to secure a safe future for the French immersion program, CPF wishes to petition the Ministry of Education and attempt to have French immersion mandated in those school areas which already have the program established."

This is signed by many thousands of concerned parents.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition, a very important one, related to library services, Bill 109, the Local Control of Public Libraries Act, sent to me by Rebecca Frise from Hastings, Ontario. It reads:

"The system of public libraries in this province has successfully and equitably met the needs of Ontarians for nearly a century and a half. This has been done through the effective use of independent citizen boards that have been relying on adequate provincial and local funding. Bill 109 and other initiatives of the present provincial government will irrevocably undo this system.

"I call on the government to withdraw Bill 109 and to:

"(1) provide for the continued existence of county library systems, as already established, and to endorse, support and nurture existing partnerships in keeping with promotion of government policy;

"(2) restore adequate provincial and local funding;

"(3) abolish and forbid user fees; and

"(4) ensure universal and equitable access to library resources and services."

I am proud to sign my name to that petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislature to the following:

"That managing the family home and caring for infants and preschool children is an honourable profession which has been recognized for its value to our society and deserves respect and support;

"That child care policies and funding should provide equity and fairness to all Ontario families;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislature to pursue policy and funding initiatives such as a child care tax credit that will support a full range of child care choices for the families of Ontario including direct parental care."

I have identified this petition.

TÉLÉVISION FRANCOPHONE DE L'ONTARIO

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario:

«Attendu que TVOntario dessert les résidentes et les résidents de l'Ontario de tous les âges depuis plus de 25 ans en leur offrant une programmation de qualité sans aucune annonce publicitaire dont les 70 % sont des émissions éducatives et des émissions pour enfant ; et

«Attendu que TVOntario est à la disposition de 97,4 % des Ontariens et Ontariennes et que pour certaines communautés non desservies par la câblodiffusion, TVO est la seule station disponible, ce qui en fait un réel atout à l'échelon provincial ; et

«Attendu que TVOntario continue de travailler à augmenter ses revenus provenant de l'autofinancement ;

«Nous, les soussignés, adressons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative pour assurer que TVOntario demeure un diffuseur d'émissions éducatives, et propriété publique financée par les fonds publics.»

J'y ajoute ma signature.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which I'd like to file with the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You can read it.

Mr Tilson: No, I'm not going to read it.

1500

RENT REGULATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the government of Ontario.

"Whereas the Mike Harris Conservative government has brought forth Bill 96, legislation which will effectively kill rent control in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris campaign literature during the York South by-election stated that rent control will continue; and

"Whereas tenant groups, students and seniors have pointed out that this legislation will hurt those that can least afford it, as it will cause higher rents across most markets in Ontario; and

"Whereas this Conservative proposal will reduce the stock of affordable housing and encourage landlords to

harass long-term residents, pushing them to move out so new tenants paying higher rents can be brought in; and

"Whereas this Conservative proposal will make it easier for residents to be evicted from retirement care homes; and

"Whereas the Liberal caucus continues to believe that all tenants, and particularly the vulnerable in our society who live on fixed incomes, deserve the assurance of a maximum rent cap;

"We, the undersigned, demand that the Conservative government scrap its proposal to abandon and eliminate rent control and to introduce legislation which will protect tenants in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000; and

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services; and

"Whereas this Minister of Health acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Minister of Health to provide the appropriate level of funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west-end community and to restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county."

I sign this as well.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is to the government of Ontario.

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris has closed three out of five hospitals in Thunder Bay and two out of three hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas drastic funding cuts to hospitals across Ontario are intimidating hospital boards, district health councils and local hospital restructuring commissions into considering the closing of local hospitals; and

"Whereas hospitals in the Niagara region have provided an outstanding essential service to patients and have been important facilities for medical staff to treat the residents of the Niagara Peninsula and will be required for people in Niagara for years to come; and

"Whereas the population of Niagara is on average older than that in most areas in the province;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health to restore adequate funding to hospitals in the Niagara region and guarantee that his government will not close any hospitals in the Niagara Peninsula."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a very important petition related to TVOntario and I was very glad to be a part of TVO MPP night last night. I was very proud that several of my colleagues joined me for the occasion. Unfortunately the government members weren't able to make it there, and it's a shame.

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I am very pleased to sign my name to this petition. The Save TVO campaign is going very well.

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is a petition to the government of Ontario.

"Since video lottery terminals will contribute to gambling addiction in Ontario and the resulting breakup of families, spousal and child abuse and crimes such as embezzlement and robbery; and

"Since the introduction of video lottery terminals across Ontario will provide those addicted to gambling with widespread temptation and will attract young people to a vice which will adversely affect their lives for many years to come; and

"Since the introduction of these gambling machines across our province is designed to gain revenue for the government at the expense of the poor, the vulnerable and the desperate in order that the government can cut income taxes, to the greatest benefit of those with the highest income; and

"Since the placement of video lottery terminals in bars in Ontario and in permanent casinos in various locations across the province represents an escalation of gambling opportunities; and

"Since Premier Harris and Finance Minister Eves were so critical of the provincial government becoming involved in further gambling ventures and making the government more dependent on gambling revenues to maintain government operations;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to reconsider its announced decision to introduce the most insidious form of gambling, video lottery terminals, to restaurants and bars in the province."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition.

LARRY GROSSMAN

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Earlier today — I don't know whether this was picked up by Hansard — when there was an exchange in the House about the future of Doctors Hospital I interjected, referring to a former member for whom we all have a great deal of respect, Larry Grossman, recognizing his role in protecting Doctors Hospital in the past, when he was a member of the House.

I know that Mr Grossman is very ill and I want to assure all members of the House that I meant no disrespect to him. I wish him well. He's a good friend of mine. I join with all members of the House in wishing him a speedy recovery.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TENANT PROTECTION ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 SUR LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 96, An Act to Consolidate and Revise the Law with respect to Residential Tenancies / *Projet de loi 96, Loi codifiant et révisant le droit de la location à usage d'habitation.*

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): It's certainly a pleasure to have an opportunity to add a few comments this afternoon concerning the legislation that's before us. I want to approach it from the perspective of an individual who had the opportunity to participate in the pre-consultation hearings throughout the entire session that they were sitting.

During that process we had the opportunity to receive some 193 different written submissions and approximately 197 oral submissions from different individuals and groups across the province, both here in Toronto and elsewhere throughout different municipalities. Certainly that pre-consultation process added greatly to the opportunity for us as a government to gain a better understanding of those issues that are important to individuals affected by tenant legislation in this province, those being landlords and tenants. It's an important stepping point in terms of providing some good input and direction with respect to the legislation we now have in front of us.

It's important to realize that in an effort to address the issue of tenant-related issues and landlord-related issues, this legislation attempts to find an element of fairness and balance between the differing viewpoints that exist between tenants and landlords in this province. It's one of truly trying to find balance, because clearly there is a difference of opinion, whether you are a tenant or a landlord. Somewhere in between, we need to find a common ground to move ahead in a positive way that finds solutions to the concerns that are expressed by many.

I found it interesting, notwithstanding the opposition we heard from various tenant organizations across the

province that was expressed with respect to the contents of the draft document, that there was little to say positively about their personal experiences with tenant legislation as it exists today. I think it's an important point to recognize that there are just as many concerns existing today with respect to the legislation that governs not only their protection, their safety, but their places of livelihood.

This legislation, in an effort to find that balance and fairness, essentially untangles six different pieces of legislation that currently regulate rental legislation in this province. It's an effort to find that balance and move away from the regulatory burden that we currently are experiencing.

At the same time, we want to very clearly provide a foundation of fairness for landlords, and I found it interesting that the member for St Catharines, during our period in this Legislature when petitions are read, raised the issue of affordability for vulnerable people in this province.

1510

It's with interest that I look back upon the history of rent control legislation. It was during the late 1980s, in fact in 1989 during the Liberal period of time, when investment returns in this province were increased by about 30%. I suspect and I hope the member for St Catharines, as a respected former minister of the crown, was equally concerned at that time about the 30% returns that landlords gained off the tenants in this province.

The fact of the matter is that on new units in this province there has been very little development. The rate of return on new units has been virtually zero. That's the stepping point we're moving forward from in terms of trying to find that balance, trying to find the fairness so that there is opportunity for investment, there is interest in creating new units in this province, to provide housing alternatives for individuals who are in the tenant market.

As it stands now, the government spends approximately \$18 million annually to administer the system. Even with that expense and given the comments we received throughout the consultation process, it was very evident that we are falling far short of where we ought to be with respect to tenants' rights and privileges and the system they need to provide the protection they're looking for.

Currently under the existing system as well, it could take as much as four months for a landlord to effectively evict a delinquent tenant. I should say it's very evident that most tenants are very forthright and very conscientious as renters of property and there's a minority of individuals who would fall into those classifications as individuals who are not cautious and respectful of the properties they rent.

We're not passing a negative viewpoint on all tenants in this province by any means. I think it's a very small number of individuals we're speaking of. But certainly it's a very important issue for landlords who find themselves in a position where they have to remedy problems with respect to problem tenants and the time frame it's taking them to deal with that process. There has to be some mechanism in place to speed this process and so that the costs associated with this process are brought more appropriately into line.

At the same time, there has to be some incentive provided for landlords to adequately maintain their buildings and ensure that work is being pursued on outstanding work orders. That's generally a very large concern to many in this province. It's conservatively estimated that there is approximately \$10 billion of outstanding renovations owed to rental properties in terms of building stock repairs in this province. That's a concern to all, both to those who own the property and obviously to those individuals who are living in facilities that are in desperate need of structural repair.

As I mentioned at the outset, we heard regularly about the experiences tenants have across this province in terms of conditions that are not satisfactory to them, and it's certainly an issue that must be remedied in an effort to move ahead and address their concerns as well as the concerns of landlords.

From my perspective, as someone who sat through the entire deliberations both here in Toronto and across the province, it certainly became very apparent to me that the current situation we have is not acceptable. We must move ahead to provide legislation for tenants and landlords in this province that is respectful of both the industry needs and tenants. I think that consultation process served very well in bringing that issue to light. I fully recognize as well that there's opposition, there's concern, there's some fear. Those are things that the government is fully aware of and sensitive to, but equally, we are committed to providing a very fair tenant protection package system.

Often we think of rental accommodation in this province as being solely owned by large developers and large property owners. In fact, about 80% of all rental buildings are made up of four or less units in this province. I think that brings a very localized perspective to the issue, because that very much means that it's not large developers who are generally occupying the rental market but individuals who are reflective of you and I; friends or neighbours who have a small business investment in various rental accommodations. Too often too much focus is placed on the larger individuals who are involved in the industry, but we must remain mindful that the largest percentage of them are very much small business people.

Those were the very people, as the committee met, who were most dramatically impacted as we moved from the Liberal approach to rent regulation to that of the NDP. The small business people found themselves in a position where it just didn't make sense any more to have rental accommodation. We heard story after story of individuals who acquired, for whatever reasons, either through personal investment or inheritance, small rental properties and who from a fiscal perspective or a personal financing perspective are simply no longer in a position to maintain and operate them.

Those are the very people we have to be mindful of as we move ahead to establish the new legislation in this province that is proposed under Bill 96. Those are the individuals who have an obviously keen interest in terms of their own properties, how they arrived at receiving those properties, contributing to their communities. Above all, it's more of a personal interest versus a professional

interest that would be more reflective of the larger development community.

I think it's important to emphasize the four key areas the bill is addressing. Those areas include the process of keeping the annual rent control guideline at 2.8%. I think it's important to realize and emphasize as well that the 2.8% which is this year's guideline is the lowest in the entire history of rent control. I think that's a very important point to highlight at the outset.

Certainly placing caps on rents is very important as well, because that is generally the fear people have. It's not so much the legislation but the fear of having escalating costs which exceed their ability to house themselves and their ability to choose the apartments of their choice.

As well, as part of the second component, to move it positively, to address the maintenance aspect, as I mentioned at the outset, there is the concern of some \$10 billion of outstanding capital or structural repairs that are estimated in this province and the need to provide incentives so that landlords move ahead progressively and in a timely fashion to start to repair and improve the building stock we currently have in the rental housing market.

To encourage the repair of buildings, this legislation allows property owners to recover the money they invest in building improvements. When landlords are prevented from recovering their costs, those repairs are not undertaken. That is certainly the case and certainly the evidence the committee heard as we heard a variety of deputations across the province.

I think it's equally important, though, as you provide incentives for landlords to move ahead positively, that we also have to remain mindful that there is a need, perhaps from a punitive side, to encourage those who are not as progressive in addressing those concerns from a property standards perspective, to provide the appropriate fine framework that would encourage people to be more progressive in dealing with maintenance issues. As a result, we are moving to double that maximum fine, in the area of \$100,000, for repeat offenders. I think that's certainly an enticement, in part, to start to move ahead and demonstrate that the government is very serious about addressing maintenance issues associated with rental accommodations in this province.

I think as well we need to emphasize from a third perspective that we must provide a very positive climate for investment so that the private sector will start to move positively to develop new units in this province. Historically, there simply haven't been the new units developed in this area, where there is an affordability and accessibility problem. It's an issue of heightened awareness in Toronto and Ottawa, and to a certain extent in Windsor, where the issues of affordability and accessibility come into play very definitely on the rental housing market, the availability of rental housing accommodation.

The legislation represents in my mind a crucial step in creating a climate where the private market will again invest in the rental real estate market. It has been evident from the outset that the government is very committed to moving ahead in areas of reform as it affects development charges in this province, as it affects reforms to the Planning Act and as it affects reforms to the housing sector or the rental part of the housing sector.

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Those actions together, in my opinion, will provide the framework by which we can start to move from a position of inactivity to one where at least there's a recognition that we're attempting to address the various regulatory burdens that exist today in preventing the further development and placing of rental units on the market.

The fourth item, which is very important as well, is the process of streamlining the administrative process. By doing that, we're moving disputes between landlords and tenants out of the courts and into a tribunal system which will be known as the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, which in our opinion will be an effective means to deliberate over disputes in a more timely and effective manner than proceeding through the court system. I fully recognize that we heard on a number of occasions that the court system has been effective in dealing with tenant disputes, but we as a government feel we can improve upon that by establishing a tribunal system and move effectively to deal with those disputes that arise between tenants and landlords.

Equally important to that whole process, though, is the process of cutting the red tape and providing the necessary vehicle to increase efficiencies that will help create a faster and fairer system of rent control in this province.

While some might ask questions, and certainly it's primarily an urban-focused issue, one of the interesting issues that was discussed for I think members from all sides of the House who were representing their various interests on the committee, and one of the issues that we heard frequently — it affects more rural Ontario and, I would say, northern Ontario — is the whole issue of home-owned lease-lot communities.

From my personal observation, it's still an issue that's not well understood. It's not well understood from the perspective of the ministry. Certainly there has been, in my opinion, a great deal of emphasis placed on all committee members during the pre-consultation period to encourage the submission of further detail and viewpoint on how to address the issue of home-owned lease-lot communities, because it's critically important, commonly used in communities in rural and northern Ontario, predominantly reflective of seniors. I think we have to be sensitive to those issues, not only in terms of seniors' ability to pay on properties they are involved in, but as well the ability of those owners who happen to own these communities to meet capital expectation and improvements.

On a regular basis we heard of examples whereby municipalities, either in disagreement or agreement or in conjunction with expectations of provincial ministries of these property owners, who were going to be required to move to a higher standard of municipal service, be it from private water and sewer to a municipal system of some sort — the concerns they had in terms of their ability to recover costs associated with those capital improvements.

Those were very valid concerns. At the same time, we have to be cautious about the ability of landlords or property owners in those areas to effectively and fairly recover those costs through those individuals who live in their communities. As I suggest, in many cases those

individuals are seniors or entry-level people who in some cases have chosen that type of community to live in.

Those were issues that came to the forefront very strongly as we moved out of Toronto as a committee and into other localities where home-owned lease-lot communities are more prevalent.

As we move forward in dealing with this bill and, as I suspect, this matter will be referred for further consideration before another standing committee, I would only hope that those individuals who had concerns centring around this particular issue have their voice heard, that the ministry, the minister, my colleagues and colleagues on all sides of the House who are involved in the committee process take the time to become better informed. I say that respectfully, because as we moved through the province I think all committee members became better informed of the issues associated with this particular issue. I would again hope that as we deal with this issue in committee, the concerns are heard and are not simply overshadowed by larger, typically urban-oriented, tenant protection issues.

I think those are very important issues that need to be dealt with. As I said at the outset, the consultation provided a very strong basis to lead us into the legislation. It was certainly very extensive, from my viewpoint, and it provides us further opportunity to receive additional input at a later date as the bill moves into further reading.

Certainly there is a different viewpoint in many communities. As I said at the outset, the issue in Toronto and Ottawa is one of accessibility and affordability. The issue in my own community is not the same. The issue is not about affordability. We have an oversupply of rental accommodation in our community, a great deal of vacant rental accommodation. At the same time, by and large, the market is already dictating what landlords are able to charge with respect to rents in the London and area community. In many cases landlords are not charging the maximum rent they could under legislation. By and large, the market is dictating a much lower rent, which is ideally what we would like to see in all cases with respect to rent controls in this province. I think it's important to realize that the market forces, albeit described as "evil" in some cases in this place, are effectively working to meet the needs of those people who choose to live in rental accommodation in this province.

I know from my own media in the London area; the London Free Press has summarized by describing the grandfathering of tenants under the established rental condition as the right thing to do, because it doesn't necessarily unfairly change the rules in a way that could come to force some people to move out.

Those are important items to remain mindful of, that this is not just a Toronto issue; it's an issue that needs to be addressed across the province. That's why it's equally important to find that fairness and balance that is reflective of all our communities in the province and not simply one or two large urban communities, recognizing that there are some significant challenges here to be dealt with.

I think as well last summer's consultations resulted in four significant changes to the proposed legislation.

One is the issue of lifetime security with respect to rental accommodation should a rental facility be converted to a condominium.

There was the issue surrounding the violation of property standards, that it will not be made an offence, but a work order may be issued immediately.

Those were typical comments that we heard from a practical perspective that just didn't make sense in the original draft document, so we've moved to address those practical observations that so many people addressed with the committee.

With respect to the issue that I raised of home-owned lease-lot communities, there is the issue of the ability of tenants in those communities to pay with respect to capital improvements and the provision that there would be consideration or provisions for anti-gouging rules and the placement of those rules in mobile home parks and land-lease communities when a new lease is entered into. Effectively this is an effort, a first important step, to address the uniqueness of those communities, and one which I felt very positively was an indication that the committee was listening to the comments we received on that particular issue.

The fourth item is the ability to carry forward capital expenditures, which will not be restricted to the two years but will be allowed until the justified amount has been recovered by the landlord. We believe this change would encourage maintenance while protecting the tenant from high rent increases in any one given year.

I said at the outset I wanted to provide some brief comments this afternoon because I have another colleague who would like to address this issue as well, as it is important to her. In summary, I think it's important to recognize that we, as a government, are making every effort to find balance in the system, fairness between those expectations that tenants have and the expectations of landlords.

I think as well that fairness needs to be achieved because there is a degree of uncertainty in the rental market industry. That uncertainty is not a positive thing. By finding a fair and balanced approach, we're safeguarding ourselves from an extreme that potentially wouldn't assist the rental industry in this province. At the same time, it provides the assurances that tenants are looking for. As we move from a system that really addresses the financing of units to one that protects and follows the tenants, it is one that should be fully considered and given every test, and it's one that is very positive in terms of moving this particular legislation forward into the future.

As I said at the outset, there has been considerable consultation already around this issue. It's one that has a great deal of history in this place, also outside of this place among tenant associations and organizations, as well as within the industry itself. It's an industry of importance, one that, as we move into the next level of debate, I suspect we will continue to hear from on an ongoing basis and continue to receive the valuable input that's important for this sector of the housing industry.

In summary, the package we have before us is a good, balanced approach. It's one that's good not only for landlords but for tenants. I think it's also good for the

economy. As we start to assess not only this legislation in isolation but also the changes we have made to the Planning Act, to the Development Charges Act that I anticipate will be coming forward, and to the Municipal Act in terms of municipal reforms and greater responsibility, I think, by and large, we can look favourably upon the impacts of this legislation and what it means to the housing industry in this province.

There's not an individual in this room who would deny the positive returns and growth we have seen in the housing sector during the last 12 months, one which needs to continue, albeit it has primarily been within the single-family development sector and the resale of existing homes, but a positive climate that's providing growth in the housing sector and development industry. I believe strongly that this legislation will continue to provide us with the necessary steps to provide a strong rental housing market in the province.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions and comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm very concerned about this issue, particularly when a number of senior citizens probably voted for this government in the last election thinking there wouldn't be any substantial changes to rent control in Ontario, and these same senior citizens and other vulnerable people on fixed incomes are now going to be thrown to the wolves if they decide they're going to move from one apartment to another.

This is in effect the end of rent control in Ontario, rent control which has permitted some increases for landlords to take place but has, overall, restricted the amounts of increases that can take place in our province. I think of students, disabled people and, as I say, our senior citizens and wonder what they're going to do when they find out that they're going to be placed in jeopardy by this legislation, which is catering largely to land developers in this province. I'm sure they were there in great numbers at the Conservative fund-raiser at the convention centre in Toronto — which had 2,500 people, probably at about \$500 a plate — there cheering them on. I know that group is going to be mighty pleased with this piece of legislation.

But there are a lot of vulnerable people in society, and they are the people who really require the protection of those of us who are elected to the assembly. A lot of vulnerable people are going to be hurt by this, particularly if they have to move from one development to another, one apartment to another, when they can see a substantial increase in rent; and their incomes are likely not going to increase.

As well, we're going to see very easy conversion from rental accommodation to condominium accommodation. What you're going to find out is that instead of increasing rental stock in this province, the consequence of this bill will be to reduce that rental stock and increase the rents.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): To respond to the comment by the previous speaker, I would like to say that the Tenant Protection Act, as it is called, does not do what it professes to do. I think the aim was to bring some equity to the disparity which exists between tenants and landlords, but unfortunately the bill does not do that.

We have spent some time hearing various people on the issues, and absolutely no one is happy with the legislation as proposed, other than the government, of course. They are happy, because they introduced the legislation — against the will of tenants, the opposition parties, developers, builders, architects, engineers and what have you. Everyone is unsatisfied with this bill.

Tenants are not satisfied, because it does not offer them any more protection than they have now; whatever little protection exists is being removed with the approval of this legislation. The minister said this will promote development of new rental units, but developers came before the committee saying: "This won't do anything for us. This will not help us to build one single affordable rental unit."

If the government has been listening to the comments of engineers, architects, builders, developers and tenants in general, why don't they come up with something much more acceptable, something much more reasonable, that indeed will bring some equity to the system and bring about a system that will be fair to developers to promote and build new affordable rental units — there is a list of 30,000 people — and be fair to tenants as well?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): While I have high regard for the member who spoke, I must say that I don't accept his analysis of the need for this legislation or its impact. Frankly, it's going to mean that tenants are stuck in their rental accommodation. It will mean they cannot move, because if they do, a new tenant coming into an apartment will be subject to a rent increase.

In my area, the committee held hearings in Sault Ste Marie on the paper, and almost unanimous was the rejection of this legislation, of the proposed changes. Of particular interest in my own constituency were the interests of residents of mobile home parks. Many members may not be aware of this, but about 10% to 12% of all the residents of mobile home parks live in my riding, north of Sault Ste Marie. Those people are particularly vulnerable because they own their own accommodation but they rent the lot on which it's located. If they are unhappy with the situation with their landlord, they don't have very many alternatives, because there are not very many lots available for them to move their homes to. It was pointed out very emphatically by representatives of the public who appeared before the committee that the proposed changes in this legislation would make residents of mobile home parks even more vulnerable.

I have said, in a somewhat jocular way, that this legislation will turn tenants into people who are essentially subject to house arrest, because they won't be able to move. If they move, they face rent increases, and that can hardly be characterized as protection of tenants' interests.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise in response to the comments made by my colleague. I certainly appreciate the sincerity of the comments, but the message that came across loud and clear from all the public hearings we attended, I know in my own community of Hamilton and right across Ontario, was very clearly that there was a tremendous mistrust by tenants of the intent of this bill.

Although the title sounded wonderful, although the rhetoric sounded great in terms of the intent of the bill,

the reality at the end of the day is that this bill is going to do nothing more than remove rent controls and leave tenants at the mercy of the market forces.

The market forces usually work well to take care of people who are wealthy, to take care of people who are working, own expensive units, who have nice cars, nice jobs. Those folks can probably deal with the changes in the market and those folks can probably adjust to the removal of rent controls, but the vast majority of tenants in Ontario do not fit that category. The vast majority of tenants in my riding of Hamilton East, which has about 8,000 housing units that tenants live in — apartment buildings — do not have the luxury of being able to simply pick up and move and choose another apartment they think they can afford, or, when they move into another apartment, of being able to handle a 20% or 25% increase or whatever the landlord decides.

Most tenants are in that exact same situation. This really is a developer protection act rather than a Tenant Protection Act. This protects the big developers, the big landlords of this province at the expense of working Ontarians, poor Ontarians every day.

1540

The Acting Speaker: The member for Middlesex has two minutes to respond.

Mr Smith: It's certainly a pleasure to have the opportunity to respond briefly to the members for St Catharines, Yorkview, Algoma and Hamilton East.

I would say to the member for St Catharines that obviously I don't support the notion that people are being thrown to the wolves or placed in jeopardy.

With respect to the issue of condo conversion, I think it's important to realize that the legislation still retains the first right of refusal to any of those individuals who would be involved in a condominium conversion process. As well, the local official plan still would have the ability contained within it for restrictions to be placed on condominium conversion. Not only are there protections on the provincial side of the legislation but certainly opportunities from the local planning perspective that those interests be protected as well.

The member for Yorkview indicated that no one is happy with the legislation, and I would suggest to him that no one is happy with the legislation we have now. I think we need to move forward. Obviously the Liberal approach is to do nothing and our approach is to move ahead positively, to find a balanced approach to the legislation. It's important to realize that we can't look at this piece of legislation in isolation from the other reforms that are taking place, as I mentioned, with respect to Planning Act and Development Charges Act changes.

I would like to recognize, though, that the member for Yorkview did represent his caucus very well throughout the entire deliberations of the consultation process. We've had the opportunity to exchange ideas on many occasions on this issue previously.

The member for Algoma made reference to the home-owned lease-lot communities, an issue I fully recognize, as I represent a rural community, and an issue that was made very evident in northern Ontario as well; one that requires great consideration, as I said at the outset; one that I hope, as we move to the next step, will be given further consideration in terms of those concerns.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Agostino: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the legislation that's in front of us, the legislation introduced by this government that somehow would like us to believe that it really is a Tenant Protection Act.

When you look at what is in front of us, when you look at the legislation, when you look at the intent, there are many ways one can describe this. The first one that would come to my mind is that it's a continuous attack on the needy in this province and it's part of a bigger agenda that this government ran on, a bigger agenda that this government espoused in the Common Sense Revolution, which they now try to hide and run from, but it's an agenda of trying to attack the most vulnerable in this province.

When you bring in a system that masks as tenant protection but what it in effect does is force tenants either to face big increases when they move or to be prisoners in their own apartments, you are hurting the most vulnerable in this province, people, as I said earlier, who do not have the flexibility, who do not have the income to be able to simply pick and choose the luxurious apartment they're going to move into next; people who are often struggling to meet their rent as it is today; people who are in buildings that do not meet the standards they should, in buildings that are in need of repairs, in buildings that often lack heat, where often the windows are drafty or windows don't exist and elevators don't work. That is the reality of many buildings across this province today.

Many of these people live in very difficult and harsh circumstances. But at least today they still have that ability not to feel intimidated, not to be stuck in this particular unit. They can try to get it fixed. Failing that, if they're fortunate enough to find something else reasonable and affordable, they still can find another building that is under protection, where rent controls are there today. Under your legislation, all that is gone.

Let me give you one specific, clear example of how this hurts the most vulnerable. Let me show you how it fits in one specific case very clearly this government's agenda of attacking people who are in need in this province. Previous governments brought in programs to help particularly women who were in situations where they were suffering from drug or alcohol abuse. Under previous legislation, before this government changed it — and I'll get to how this fits — if a woman checked into a treatment program and she was on welfare, she could continue to collect her welfare payments for a number of months while still being in a residential treatment program. That means a woman could check into a treatment program for alcohol abuse and continue for up to six months to collect welfare assistance to pay her rent on her apartment so she wouldn't be forced out while she was receiving treatment.

What did this government do? In its wisdom, in its wonderful vision and foresight and compassion, this government changed the legislation. What happens now is that if a woman checks into a treatment program for alcohol or drug abuse, her welfare is immediately cut off. That means she immediately loses her apartment. That means she goes into a treatment program for three or four

months, she comes out and she has no apartment. If that's not bad enough, the same woman, once she comes out of this treatment program, will have to find a new apartment, a new rental unit.

I would venture to say that most of these people who are collecting welfare probably aren't very wealthy; that's why they're on welfare. Now they're stuck, because with your legislation, once that woman has lost that apartment because she has made the choice to move into a treatment program, which is a good thing, she now has to move into a unit that no longer fits under rent controls; she now has to move into a unit where a landlord can charge whatever he or she chooses to charge. That's one very clear, very simple example of how your legislation is going to impact the most vulnerable and the neediest in this province.

What do you say to this woman now? What do the Tory members say? The message you're sending is: "Stay on welfare. Continue your drug and alcohol problem. Don't check into a treatment program, because if you do, you're going to lose your apartment because we're going to be taking your welfare away. Then once you come out, you have to find a new apartment, maybe at double what you're paying now."

You're attacking kids, kids living in poverty. You've done that from day one. You attacked kids from day one when you took office. You attacked kids in Ontario the day you cut welfare benefits by 22%. You pounded your chest during the Common Sense Revolution and you pranced out all these people who were living high off the hog on welfare. You abused and stepped on welfare recipients for your political purposes. You cut their benefit by 22% while failing to acknowledge that 400,000 kids in this province were relying on welfare assistance. So 400,000 kids had their benefits cut by 22%, and you talk about protecting children and you talk about children in poverty and you talk about children's rights on that side of the House. What have you done? You cut their benefits by 22%.

You're now making those children, living often with single parents in apartment buildings now under rent control, prisoners of that building, of that unit, because their parents — their parent as it is in most cases — will not have that choice to move once your legislation comes in, because your legislation says that once you move out of the unit you're in, rent controls end both for the unit you're leaving and the unit you're moving into. So you're hurting kids again. You're hurting the most vulnerable.

You have attacked the disabled community. You promised in the Common Sense Revolution you weren't going to attack the disabled community, you were going to spare them, they weren't on your hit list. Welfare recipients were on your hit list, visible minorities were on your hit list, a bunch of other people were on your hit list when you took office, but you claimed that the disabled community was not on your hit list.

They were not part of your target, because it was not politically popular. It was politically popular to beat up on single moms, it was politically popular to beat up on welfare recipients, it was politically popular to beat up on visible minorities, but it was not politically popular to

beat up on disabled people, so you claimed in the Common Sense Revolution you weren't going to do that. 1550

What did you do? You cut benefits to disabled people who were receiving welfare. You cut support services. You cut agencies that serve the disabled community. You cut funding to transportation services that serve the disabled.

Many disabled people who live independently in this province live in subsidized apartment units that today they consider affordable. What are you doing to those people under this legislation? What are you doing for the disabled individual in Ontario under this bill? What is in here to protect them if they want to move because they don't like the apartment they're living in, because maybe there's another apartment that's more accessible for their wheelchair, maybe there's another apartment that has consistent heat in the winter, instead of drafty windows? What are you doing to those folks through this legislation?

What you are saying to them is: "You are a prisoner in your unit, because if you dare to leave that apartment, if you dare move, you know what? Rent controls are gone. The apartment you move into is no longer under rent controls. The landlord can charge you anything he wants. You may be paying \$300, \$400 a month right now, but there's nothing stopping someone from charging you \$800 a month for a new unit." You have taken away the protection that was there, so you've hurt the disabled.

You've hurt seniors. Aid for seniors was not going to be cut. That was a famous line in the Common Sense Revolution. Two years after the revolution steamrolled over Ontario, there are still 8,000 senior citizens receiving welfare, because you moved them out of the category, at 22% less than two years ago. That is not cutting aid for seniors? Well, ask those 7,000 or 8,000 seniors if their benefits have not been cut by 22% in the last two years. Ask those seniors who now have to pay user fees for drugs. Ask the seniors whose services you have cut. Ask the seniors whose agencies that serve them you have cut. Ask them if services have not been cut.

You're going to attack senior citizens again through this legislation, because many seniors who live in what is affordable housing for them, affordable apartment units, will also become prisoners, will also be stuck in their own units. You know what? They're intimidated. They won't dare complain if it's too cold in the winter. They won't dare complain if there's a leak. They won't dare complain if the elevator doesn't work, if the fire exit sign doesn't work or maybe the fire exit door doesn't open. They won't dare complain, because they're afraid to be thrown out, because once they're thrown out, under your legislation they have no choice but to move into another unit, which means rent controls will not be on because they have left the unit they're in; they've lost that protection. You force senior citizens to be prisoners in their own apartments.

How can you not say that this is an attack on the most vulnerable in our society? How can you not say that forcing people who are struggling on limited, fixed incomes, forcing those individuals to remain in the unit they're in, come hell or high water, under all circum-

stances, because if they move the rent protection is lost, how can you not say that is attacking the most vulnerable?

Let's compare that to someone living in a unit paying \$1,500 or \$2,000 a month. My sense is that the living conditions just may be a little different from the disabled or the senior or the single mom with a couple of kids living in a building paying \$300 or \$400 a month. Somehow, the concerns about the heat won't be there. Somehow, the concerns about the elevators working may not be there. Somehow, the concerns about the roof leaking may not be there. Somehow, if they choose to move, if their rent goes from \$2,000 to \$3,000 a month or from \$3,000 to \$4,000, it's probably not a big deal because their income can handle it. That is really who you're protecting here. How can you sit here and suggest that you're not hurting seniors, disabled, kids, welfare recipients, the most vulnerable in our province?

In case after case that I've outlined, the people who are most vulnerable under this legislation are going to be those folks. They're probably not too big a priority on your list. We've seen that already. Your actions have said that clearly. Your actions already have moved to marginalize these people. You've moved to marginalize seniors, the disabled, welfare recipients, poor kids, single moms. You've done that from day one, so this is only one further step.

I had a meeting in my riding four months ago to deal with rent controls, to deal with the proposed legislation. This meeting was attended by over 200 people on very short notice. Every single person who spoke was fearful of this legislation. Every single person who spoke said: "You know what? The system we have now is not perfect, but it has improved. It has come a long way and it has certainly gotten better over the years. But the system that is now being introduced and will be implemented by this government is about to make life miserable for us." That was almost unanimous. Almost every single person who spoke expressed those concerns.

We have organizations in my riding — McQuesten Community and Legal Services, a Hamilton action coalition of tenants' associations, other organizations in Hamilton such as the Housing Help Centre and the self-help centre — who deal with tenants and tenant issues every day. Speak to those folks. Find out what tenants are telling them. Find out what the most vulnerable tenants in this province are saying to the organizations that work with them and try to help them, and they'll tell you the fear that is there. They'll tell you how people are afraid, are intimidated. They will be further afraid and intimidated as a result of the legislation.

What protection do you have for someone who, for whatever reason, has to move out of the unit they're in and then has to move into a new unit which they cannot afford because you've taken rent controls away? What part of this legislation protects those people? What part of this legislation helps make up the difference between what they're now paying and what they may have to pay? You're going to leave it to the goodwill of the market to take care of that.

The survival of the fittest may work well in the jungle, but it certainly is not what we've built this province on.

Trying to help vulnerable people, trying to help people on fixed or limited incomes, is what built this province. Survival of the fittest has been the American concept over the years. That's what your Republican governors, the people you based your campaign on, are preaching and talking about all the time. But that is not what previous Ontario governments of Bob Rae, David Peterson, Bill Davis, Robarts, Frost and others over the years have built this province on. It wasn't built on, "If you can make it on your own, that's great; if you can't, that's too bad," the attitude you're taking not only with rent controls but with many other issues every day in this Legislature.

What is disturbing with all this as well is how the government tries to play both sides of this coin, how it tries to suck up to the developers and their rich, powerful friends who have donated millions to you over the years, how you try to say: "We'll take care of you. This is going to help you. You're going to be able to build apartment buildings right across this wonderful province and charge whatever the hell you want."

You promise them you'll fill their pockets, because once rent controls are gone people aren't going to have a choice. You try to play that end of it with your developer friends, with the big corporations. Then at the other end, you bring in legislation that's called the Tenant Protection Act. "It's not really removing rent controls." You keep claiming that. You keep saying, "This is not taking rent controls away." In the same legislation, though, as soon as someone moves out of their building, the unit they move out of is no longer covered by rent control, so that unit becomes all of a sudden without rent controls, for the first time in many, many years in this province.

Let me remind you, rent controls were brought in by a Conservative government in this province because they saw a need that was there — a Progressive Conservative government, not the Reform government we have today, a Preston Manning or Christine Whitman style of government, but a Progressive Conservative government that had some compassion and some sense of community, that saw there was a need there and moved to address it.

That unit, for the first time since before those days, is no longer going to be under rent control. How can you say it is tenant protection? How can you say you're not eliminating rent control? We have a turnaround rate of approximately 20% a year, so once your legislation is in place, within five years, maybe six at the most, maybe even seven because people will be less likely to move — they'll stay in substandard, intimidating conditions because they're afraid once they move they'd have to move to a non-controlled unit — every single unit in Ontario will be without rent controls — every single unit.

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Your own members' quotes are interesting. On the one hand you're suggesting you're not going to remove them. Mike Harris said:

"We want to bring in a rent control program that will protect tenants and give them lower rents. We will replace nothing until we have a superior plan in place proven to work better."

That was Mike Harris on April 3, 1995, before he became Premier. If you read that, it leads you to believe

that rent controls are not going to be removed, that tenants should be happy, right? Mike Harris said: "We're not going to do anything until we bring in something better, something that's actually going to protect you. We're not going to get rid of rent controls."

Al Leach said on October 19, after the revolution had kicked in and the troops had taken over the palace, "I've said it before and I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go." So do we believe Al Leach when he said on April 19 to the Ontario Home Builders' Association — surprise, surprise — that rent controls have got to go, or do we believe the Premier on April 3, 1995, when he said, "We want to bring in a rent control program to protect tenants"? I don't know whom to believe, frankly. Based on what has happened today, Al Leach is right. Rent controls are going, are gone, are going to be eliminated in Ontario.

It's very clear. The Premier says, "We're going to bring in a rent control program to protect tenants and give them lower rents." Maybe someone on that side of the House, when they speak on this issue, can explain to me how a tenant moving out of a unit today that is under rent control will somehow be better protected and have lower rents by moving to a unit that no longer has rent controls. Maybe I'm missing something here. Maybe someone can enlighten me and tell me how that is going to work, because surely experience has not shown any of that.

You believe that all of a sudden, because you remove rent controls, it's going to spur this great development, that buildings are just going to be built all over the place? There's not a shortage of high-end housing in this province. There's not a shortage of high-end rental units in this province. What there is a shortage of is affordable, lower-end, subsidized housing. That's where the waiting lists are, folks. It isn't for the big condos in the sky. The waiting list is not at that end. The waiting list is for people who are on fixed incomes, the working poor, many individuals who are on pensions, disability, otherwise, who cannot get affordable housing. Which developer is going to go out and build units for those folks? Where are all these units going to come from? How are you going to deal with the shortage and the crisis in affordable housing in Ontario by getting rid of rent controls? Do you think all of a sudden somebody is going to go and put up a 50-storey apartment building and say: "You know what? I'm going to make this affordable. I'm not going to charge \$1,500 a month. I'm going to charge \$500 a month?"

That's ludicrous. It's crazy. It ain't going to happen.

If the need is not at the top end of the scale where the money can be made, then is there not a different role for government to play than simply to remove rent controls and suggest that by removing this, there's going to be all that housing development and all of a sudden all these buildings are going to go up, pop up in the sky across this great province of ours? I doubt it. I doubt if it's going to get close to touching that.

If it is not going to help that, if it is not going to spur the economy, and it is not and there's very little evidence — I would challenge members across the floor to show what evidence there has been in what jurisdiction

that the removal of rent controls has led to an increase in affordable housing — if that isn't going to happen, then what are you left with? You're left simply with an attack on the poor, an attack on tenants. You're left with a situation where you're only going to open the door to allow your rich landlord friends to make more money on the backs of the neediest in this province.

If you look at the numbers and what makes up the majority of people who rent across this province, you only have to look at the percentage of their income they pay for rent. Over one third of renters in Ontario pay more than 30% of their income for housing. This is the current level with rent controls, so you can imagine what happens when you remove rent controls from this package. One third of tenants in Ontario earn below \$23,000 a year. Last year 66% of welfare recipients or social assistance recipients in Ontario paid more than their shelter allowance, and that is again under rent controls; 66% of people in Ontario receiving assistance paid more than the shelter allowance given to them. That means that money came out of food, out of clothes, out of shoes. Money came out of those budgets to pay their rent. That was under the old system with rent control, with at least some degree of protection. What happens to that same person now once you remove rent controls? Eighty-three per cent of two-parent families with two kids, receiving assistance, had paid rent higher than the shelter allowance given to them. That's a pretty damn high number. That's under the old system.

What happens under your new system? What happens once you remove the ceiling? What happens once you take away the protection that is there for tenants? What happens to those numbers? Does the 83% obviously become 100%? Does that 66% number that reflects social assistance recipients who pay more than they receive in shelter allowance for rent? You've got to remember, if a single mum with a couple of kids is paying substantially more than the shelter allowance given to her for rent, then that money can only come out of what she does for her kids. There's not a heck of a lot left. Are you going to increase welfare benefits to make up the difference somehow? I doubt it.

If someone with a couple of kids moves, is forced out of a building, out of a unit, and is receiving family benefits and their shelter allowance is at \$300 a month and all of a sudden they've got to pay \$500 or \$600, are you going to increase their benefits by \$300? Why do I have a tough time believing this government would even consider that for a second? You're not going to do that. That's a given. Nobody expects you to do that. We know you're not going to do it. You've cut their benefits by 22%. So how do these people manage? How do these people cope? How can one argue against the fact that this is going to hurt the people in Ontario who can least afford it? There is absolutely no other way around it; there is no other way to explain it; there is no way to try to skate around this issue. Again I would ask the government members to address that. You're going to get up here to speak.

I would ask you to address how this is going to help a disabled person who may be forced out of her unit because another building may have better wheelchair

access, may have wider doors, may have lower light switches, may have a better working elevator, may be more accessible. Maybe someone on the government side of the House can tell me how this Tenant Protection Act is going to ensure that person moves into a better accessible unit and not have to pay more money. How are you going to guarantee that, or on the other hand, if they do, that you're going to increase their disability benefits and their pension for that to happen? That's not going to happen. Of course it's not going to happen.

I don't understand what has motivated this government to do this. I don't really understand it. We're not talking about a small group of people here. There are 3.2 million tenants in Ontario.

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I can tell you that tenants will organize. I can tell you that tenants will fight back. I can tell you that tenants will petition your offices. I can tell you that tenants will sign petitions, that tenants will hold meetings, will hold rallies, and they're not going to forget. If you're cocky enough and arrogant enough to believe you can dismiss 3.2 million voters with the stroke of a pen, if you believe you can dismiss the wishes of 3.2 million people that easily, if you think your polling numbers are that good that you can afford to throw away those 3.2 million votes, then I ask you do so at your own peril, because tenants are not going to forget.

Tenants are going to hold you accountable for the fact that they are going to be prisoners in their own units, that they're going to be trapped in conditions they shouldn't be in, that they're going to lose freedom and flexibility because of what you have done, because of your promise to your developer friends, to your corporate friends, to your real estate friends that you're going to get rid of rent controls. Somehow there's going to be this cash cow coming in for them. Tenants are not going to forget what you have done to them, that you shafted them, that you betrayed them.

This fight will be over soon in the Legislature because you have a majority. You're not going to listen to anybody and you're going to ram this thing through. We know that. That is the reality. The fight will be over in the Legislature once you've passed this bill, but this fight is going to go on in every apartment building, in every unit, in every city, in every town, in every street that has an apartment building on it, across this province for the next two years.

It's going to come back to haunt you. It is going to hound you at election time. If not every single member, the vast majority of members have tenants in their ridings. Many have more than others. In many ridings, the tenant vote will make the difference between winning or losing.

I urge the government members to stand up for your constituents, stand up for people in this province who need your help, who don't have a voice. Do not listen to the whiz kids in the Premier's office, because they won't be there at election time to protect you. You're on your own when you have to go to the door of a tenant and explain to that senior citizen or that disabled person why they're trapped in their building or why they have to face 25% increases. Do what is right. Do what is honourable.

Vote against this bill. Protect tenants and protect the people you've been elected to protect.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions or comments?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I just want to respond quickly to the comments made by the member for Hamilton — is it Centre?

Mr Agostino: East.

Mr Bisson: I didn't think it was Centre. My good friend Dave Christopherson might mind that one.

I just want to say that what we need to take a look at what the motivation of the government is in getting away from a rent control system in Ontario. Let's make no mistake about what the government is doing here. The government of Ontario of the day, the Mike Harris government, is saying that when this legislation passes, barring any amendments made to the bill, tenants will no longer have the protection of absolute caps when it comes to the rent being charged for their apartments. Presently under the law, if a landlord wants to increase the rent, he or she can only do so up to a maximum amount. What happens with this new legislation is that there will be no cap, there will be no control. Once the person leaves the apartment, the landlord will be able to either increase or decrease the rent to whatever the amount might be.

The problem is that in cities like Toronto or Hamilton where the vacancy numbers are quite low, we know what the laws of the market will do. We know what supply and demand does. When there is a very high demand and there's a very low supply, we know the rents aren't going to go down; the rents are going to go up. If the landlord is able to get a higher price for his or her rent, we understand that. We're all human beings. The businessperson says, "I own an apartment building and I'm charging \$800 a month for the unit, and hey, all of a sudden I can get \$1,100." The landlord is going to go for the \$1,100, but what does that mean to the tenant?

When the government says, "We are trying to devise legislation that's fair and balanced," I don't see anything fair and balanced in this. I see quite a balance towards the landlord.

What's the real issue? I think if the government were to be fair and balanced in their approach, we would look at what the issues are for landlords and tenants, and those are found within the Landlord and Tenant Act, not the Rent Control Act. That's an argument I've always put forward in this Legislature and on which I'll get an opportunity to comment further later.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): It's my pleasure to respond to the member for Hamilton East and his comments about the proposed legislation.

We have not in fact taken our guidance from any staff member in the Premier's office; we've been listening to the tenants themselves.

The physical condition of the buildings in my riding is utterly deplorable in some cases, and small wonder. Almost half of the public housing stock in this province is older than 25 years of age. It's small wonder these buildings are starting to take on the resemblance, in some cases, of some of the worst slums; not because it was any government's intention, of any stripe, but because the sheer realities of our climate, if nothing else, have

guaranteed the continued decline of the physical stock and because there was no incentive for the landlord to make investments in improving and maintaining those buildings. They couldn't even recover the cost of fixing them up.

Clearly it has not been in the best interests of the tenants to have substandard housing. We may have all the property standard rules, but if there is no incentive for the landlord to recover the money — and that includes the governments, both provincial and municipal — to recover those investments, they just don't get done.

This bill is all about ensuring that there is a fair balance. In all of Metro Toronto in the year 1995-96 there were 20 multi-unit apartments constructed. Some 50,000 more people lived in Toronto and only 20 housing units were built. Clearly the current law is not working. It isn't meeting the needs of tenants. It isn't meeting the needs of anyone, because as I mentioned earlier, the landlords are just as disaffected and just as concerned.

This bill will improve the climate for investment in multi-unit housing projects in this province. It will encourage maintenance by allowing the flow-through of those costs to a greater extent and in a more timely fashion. But it has to be stressed that existing tenants are still controlled, absolutely controlled, against rent gouging in their current units, and only if they move out would there be a change in those circumstances.

Mr Sergio: I welcome the opportunity to respond to the comments made by the member for Hamilton East. I have to say, on behalf of the House, that he has given a very comprehensive overview of the bill as it has been introduced in the House. He has mentioned everything from how the bill affects tenants in general to the most needy ones in our society, including those who are lying in nursing home beds and are in fear now that they may have to move far away, to the despair of seniors themselves and their families, to the ones he has most crystalized: the children of those families that cannot afford to move to another location.

I can tell you that I have cases in my own particular riding where families, and especially single mothers, with two and three and four kids are forced not to speak up, are not able to move out of their existing apartments. They are forced to keep their children inside because they know what goes on in the yard and in the halls and in the staircases of some of those buildings. There are drugs taking place, there is prostitution taking place, and those tenants are not able to speak up for fear of reprisal, because they know if they move out they will not find the tenant protection they now enjoy in the existing unit. They will not be able to afford another location, another unit. Therefore, as the member for Hamilton East said, this is not tenant protection. There is no tenant protection once you remove those guidelines.

I think he has given a wonderful, comprehensive and —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member's time is up. Further questions or comments.

Mr Wildman: I'd like to congratulate the member for Hamilton East on his remarks. I took very seriously his concern about those who are vulnerable and are at the bottom of the income scale and what the effects of this

legislation, euphemistically called tenant protection, will have on them.

This is not tenant protection; this is an attack on the rights of those who rent. It is an attack on their ability to defend themselves against the market and to ensure that they have shelter which is adequate.

The government says this protects tenants because as long as they stay in their accommodation they will not have rent increases. They say that rent control as proposed by our government and previous governments did not protect tenants, it applied only to accommodation, and that their approach is to protect the tenant. How silly. That's just silly. As I've said before, what this law effectively does is to turn tenants into people who are under house arrest. They cannot move. If they move, they will be subject to rent increases. As the member for Hamilton East pointed out, if these are people who are dependent on social assistance, this government has effectively made it impossible for them to move by cutting their income by 22%, so they are prisoners in their homes. How can anyone characterize this as tenant protection?

The problem with this government is, for some reason I can't understand, that they believe that the poor have too much and the rich have not enough.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton East.

Mr Bradley: Don't we have one more?

The Acting Speaker: There is one more?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I am sorry. Just one moment, member for St Catharines. I think four have spoken, because we had a Liberal, so we went NDP, Tory, Liberal, NDP. I was right. The figure was right after all, and now the member for Hamilton East can sum up.

1620

Mr Agostino: I thank the members for Cochrane South, Scarborough East, Yorkview, Algoma, and the attempt by the member for St Catharines for their input. I'm sure if you had given him a chance to speak, he would have said some wonderful things about me; I paid him to do that earlier today. I'm sure it would have been worth the money I gave him.

I appreciate the comments that have been made, even the comments from the government member who said, "We are listening to tenants." I find that somewhat interesting, because I sat in on all the hearings in Hamilton, I read the Hansard of many of the hearings that took place across Ontario, and there were very few examples of tenants or tenant groups actually coming forward and supporting the legislation that is in front of us. Again, the key in all this is the issue of protecting people while they remain in their units, which is true, and no one will disagree that this legislation does that: "While you stay in the unit you're in, you're going to be subject to rent control."

Do we not realize, though, that we're then taking away individual freedom, individual choice, we're taking away the opportunity for people to have some bargaining power, we're taking away the opportunity for people to complain and not feel intimidated or oppressed and be forced to stay in the situation they're in? That is the reality of what this bill does today. I go back to what I

said earlier: The biggest impact of this legislation is not going to be on people living in high-end, expensive accommodation; the biggest impact of this bill will be on the poor, the disabled, children, people receiving welfare and family benefits, and senior citizens, people who are generally on fixed incomes and cannot afford to have their rents go up at the will of the market. I ask you again to do the right thing and protect those folks.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I am happy to be able to rise to speak on this bill, but I am not so happy about what this bill is going to do to the millions of residents in Ontario who live in rental housing units. It is really unfortunate that it has taken a number of years to move forward progressively, one step at a time, to try to create rent control legislation in this province that adequately protects tenants and at the same time allows a landlord to make a living renting out his or her apartment building. It's taken a lot of years. It first started under the Conservative government in the 1970s, when it was pushed by the then leader of the NDP, Stephen Lewis, and other members of our caucus who were there at the time, who were able to highlight the issues of what was happening within an unregulated rental market where people's rents were going literally through the roof.

In the 1970s you had people who were being forcibly evicted from their apartment buildings in the city of Toronto and other cities across this province. Why? Because they couldn't afford to pay the rent increases the landlords were trying to pass on year after year in order to exploit the marketplace. Even the Bill Davis government of the 1970s, the Conservative government of the day, recognized that when the pressure was on they had to do something, that you couldn't have a situation where people were being forcibly evicted from their apartments because they couldn't afford to pay the rent. So with some pressure, a lot of work on the part of tenants in this province and a lot of work on the part of the NDP and others, the Bill Davis government listened, and for that we gave them full credit. They introduced what was the first piece of rent control legislation in the country we call Canada, and it was done here in Ontario.

Since the mid-1970s every Parliament, every government since then, has tried to build on the successes of their predecessors. We saw changes to the rent control legislation again in the 1980s under the David Peterson government, not exactly what I would have wanted at the time, but at least they were steps forward; and under the Bob Rae government we finally moved to a system where there is an absolute cap on the amount of rent that can be increased on the part of a landlord. It was set in law.

I remember the debate of the day, because not everybody was unanimously supporting what we were doing as a government, but by and large — Madam Speaker, you were there and you know, because you come from a downtown riding where this is a very important bread-and-butter issue for the people you represent — in the end the majority of the people in the province supported what the Bob Rae NDP government had done. Why? Because it was built on fairness and it was built on reality. We realize that landlords have to be able to make a dollar, but they cannot make that dollar at the expense

of the tenant to the point that the tenant can't afford to live in that apartment building.

That sets the scene we've seen over a period of time with every government since the mid-1970s: first of all introducing rent control legislation and then every time after that building a better rent control system that works for all.

I remember the election of 1995 because the Tories of the day, the third party under Mike Harris, were making noises about getting rid of rent control. I remember that election well because I was a participant in that election, as you were, Madam Speaker, and everybody else who was in this assembly. At first Mike Harris thought he had a hot button because he had sort of worked against rent control when we had done it. Not "sort of"; he worked against our rent control moves in 1992 and 1993. Mike Harris thought he had a hot button. You know what he thought? "We can tell the people of Ontario that rent control is no good and we're going to make better rent controls for citizens," when what they were really talking about was the elimination of rent control.

The public of Ontario realized what was going on and they started putting pressure on Tory candidates in the last provincial election. How did they end up winning their seats? They said, "I make a solemn oath that I, Bill Saunderson, the member for Eglinton," "I, Derwyn Shea, the member for High Park-Swansea," "I, Al Leach, the member for St George-St David, will not rip rent control apart." "We will preserve rent control" was in their leaflets. They made solemn promises. I remember canvassing in that particular riding for a short bit coming through Toronto one day and seeing on elevators and in hallways in apartment buildings the solemn pledge by the now minister responsible for scrapping rent control: "I will not scrap rent control." I remember those leaflets.

Mr Gilchrist: We didn't do it.

Mr Bisson: The parliamentary assistant says, "We didn't do it." We'll get to that in a second.

They get elected, and what do they do? They flip-flop. They completely turn around by 180 degrees and are running the other way. I heard what they said during the election, that's the problem here, and so did the people of Ontario, especially those people who will be affected by this legislation, namely those tenants who live in cities and towns like Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener, Sudbury and other municipalities, to name a few, where there are very low vacancy rates. They heard what was being promised, because the Tories recognized that if you start mucking around with rent control, you're mucking around with bread-and-butter issues of people. In the end, what does the average citizen care about? "That I've got a roof over my head, I've got enough money coming in the door that I can buy food, and every now and then I can go out and enjoy myself and have a bit of pleasure in my life." When you start mucking around with one of those three things, I'll tell you people don't like it, and that's exactly what this government is doing. They're threatening the tenants of this province by what they are doing through this legislation.

What are they doing specifically? Let's move to that. Unfortunately, I've only got about 24 minutes to go through this entire piece of legislation, and there's not

enough time to properly do it. I'll do as best I can in the 24 minutes I've got. Let's go through it one piece at a time just so that we understand here what the government is trying to do.

1630

Let's get to the crux of it. What are they doing? Quite simply, they are saying that in the future, when this legislation is passed and a tenant moves out of a building that is now protected by rent control, the landlord will be able to charge what they want for the rent, no matter.

Madam Speaker, let's say I am the landlord and you are my tenant. You say, "Mr Bisson" — or Gilles, if we are on first-name terms, which we are — "I'm leaving your apartment." I go and rent it to my good friend Cam Jackson across the way. Cam walks into my building and says, "Gilles, I want to rent an apartment unit from you." If I charged you \$800 a month for that one-bedroom apartment in downtown Toronto, I can charge him \$1,000, I can charge him \$2,000 or I can charge him \$500. There is no rent control once you've left that apartment. And the government has the gall to stand in this House and say, "We're not scrapping rent control"? Come on. What do you think people are? Of course you're scrapping rent control. Rent control is not just about protecting the tenant; it's about protecting the rent on the apartment so that every tenant who comes after is protected when it comes to the price of the rent.

The reality is that we have very low vacancy rates, and there are reasons for that and I'll get to that later, because the government makes a big fanfare as to the reason they've got to do what they are doing.

But the crux of it is that they are getting rid of rent control. When you're able to charge somebody any amount of money you want for rent once the apartment is vacant, that means there is no longer any rent control. The government says once the person moves out and Cam becomes my tenant, he's under rent control. Whoopee-doo. Right, Cam? If I'm charging you \$1,200 a month and I used to charge Marilyn \$800, that's real good for you. I've already gouged you. It doesn't make a whole bunch of difference.

The interesting thing is what the government is doing by way of this legislation, Bill 96, when it comes to brand-new apartment buildings. I had to check with the parliamentary assistant, because I had read the notes I had written about this bill some months ago when it was first introduced in this House and I didn't believe my own notes. My notes said, "All new units will be exempt from rent control forever." I thought: "Oh, Gilles, you were being an alarmist when you read the bill. That can't be. Certainly at one point, after the building is built and after a number of years, when the tenant moves in, it will fall under some system of rent control."

I then picked up the legislation and I thought: "My Lord, I think when I read the legislation I was right." So I checked with the parliamentary assistant, and I am right. If you build a brand-new apartment building in the province of Ontario under this bill, there will never be any rent control on it. Never.

The government says we have to do this because this is the only way we can encourage builders to build new apartment buildings. I'm going to get to that discussion

in a second, but the point I want to make is to go back to the first one, that rent control will not apply once you move out of a building, and if you move into a brand-new building there will be no rent control. That is what is called a deregulated market. What's going to happen, and I predict it and I'm going to say it here today, this date, May 28, 1997, here in the Legislature: You will see rents go up drastically in Ontario, especially in cities like Toronto and Hamilton, once this legislation is introduced and people start moving out of their apartments. No question about it. It is going to happen.

Why? Because those are the laws of the market, and if anybody should understand that, it's you people across the way. The Conservatives tout themselves as the masters of the economy and the masters of the market, and they have the gall to stand here and say: "Oh, Gilles, you're an alarmist. Of course rents won't go through the roof." Come on. Supply and demand. Grade 10 economics class: I took it. The reality is that once you deregulate the rental units and you have low vacancy rates, the landlord will increase the rent, and if he or she doesn't, I'd be very surprised. I would be terribly surprised, because the reality is, when it comes down to it, I don't care who you are — and in a way I don't blame the landlords; I understand it — if you have the chance to make a bigger dollar, what are you going to do? You're going to take it. You're going to do it.

It's like I go to work in the morning and my boss says, "Gilles, you're an electrician and you're getting 21 bucks an hour, but if you come to work tomorrow, I'll pay you 23." I'm going to say no? Of course I'm going to say yes. It's the same thing with the landlord.

I should have rephrased it this way: If I go to work and the employer gives me an opportunity to work overtime, more times than not I'm going to do it, because it's more money in my pocket. That is what I really find amazing, that the government has the gall to stand there and say rents won't go through the roof. Come on. The economics are very simple: Supply and demand is going to happen.

The government is saying we need to do this, we need to change this law, why? Because there are no apartment buildings being built in the province. I agree with you. There haven't been a lot of apartment buildings built in Ontario in a number of years, but that is not true just in Ontario. Do you think Ontario is an island unto itself, that it's an economy on its own and is not affected by what happens in Manitoba, Quebec, New York or California? Go and look at the stats in those other jurisdictions. Brand-new apartment buildings aren't being built there either. Why? Because of the cost of construction. It's the price of land; it's the rate of taxes. Yes, in some cases it's the regulation by which you have to meet standards to build these apartment buildings. Those are the issues that developers look at.

I say to the parliamentary assistant across the way, I will bet you today, right now, whatever amount of money you want within the marginal means I have at my disposition, unlike you —

Mr Gilchrist: Your re-election. You won't run again.

Mr Bisson: I will get re-elected; don't worry about that. But I will bet you that five years after this legisla-

tion, new construction will not be any greater than it is now by any kind of significant amount. The reality is, the current rent control system that Bob Rae had in place, which was introduced in 1992-93, exempts apartment buildings for a period of five years. If you build a brand-new apartment building, there is no rent control on it for five years. So the market establishes the rent, and at the end of five years rent control is applied.

The government is going to say, "You know, Gilles, the problem is that the developer knows that at one point it will be applied." I say it doesn't make a heck of a lot of difference. The reality is, look at the building costs. If you go out and build a 20-unit apartment building in the city of Timmins, what do you think is the rent you have to charge on that apartment to recoup your investment over a period of 20 years? Take a guess.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): You can't afford it.

Mr Bisson: Exactly. You can't afford it. It's somewhere between \$900 and \$1,100 on a two-bedroom unit in Timmins. That maybe doesn't sound the same here, but for our rental market, that's quite a bit. The point is, the cost of construction is anywhere from \$90,000 to \$110,000 per unit. That's what the cost is. If you amortize that over a period of 20 or 25 years, the reality is that the amount of rent you would have to charge to recoup what it cost you to build doesn't make it economically feasible.

Use the simple rule that for every \$100,000 of mortgage, you have about \$1,000 a month in payment. That's what it comes down to. It's pretty simple stuff. If you're in a market such as we have in Timmins, if you're trying to charge \$1,000 for a two-bedroom apartment, you're not going to rent it, because you can probably get one cheaper than that.

In the city of Toronto, the building costs are even higher. You've got to transport your materials from northern Ontario down to here. The cost of labour is higher in some cases. The property prices in southern Ontario are through the roof. If you go out and buy half a block to build an apartment building in downtown Toronto or Mississauga or Burlington, you will pay a pretty penny compared to what you'll pay in Timmins and that cost per unit is significantly higher than you'd find in the city of Timmins.

Those are the issues. That's the reason they're not building apartment buildings. So don't come into this House and don't go to the public saying, "We're going to do this and we're going to get all kinds of construction to happen," because it ain't gonna happen. The reality and what it comes down to is that it's too expensive for landlords to build it.

If you want to address those issues, I'm prepared to do it. When I was the critic for housing, when the Minister of Housing first started advancing the idea of scrapping rent control — look at the Hansard records. I said it then and I'll say it again: I am prepared as a New Democrat to sit down with you to address those issues, because I think they are real issues. I have no argument with you there. Let's take a look at the level of regulation in the developer's face when it comes to being able to move projects forward. There are some things you have done

that address some of that. There are other things that need to be done. Let's not do that at the expense of the environment, let's not do that at the expense of good planning, but there are certain things we can do. Let's take a look at the issues around development charges, let's take a look at all of those issues. I'm prepared to address that as a New Democrat.

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But my fear is, even if we do all that, we still will not address the basic issue, which is the cost of the building itself. That's going to be, in the end, what's going to determine. The only way you can lower that: We'll have to lower people's wages, or you're going to have to go to the property owner and say, "Lower your price." I don't know about you, but I don't want to live in a system where the government comes in and tells an individual property owner what they have to charge for the property, or what you can charge for labour as a worker. In a democratic society I don't think that's what we'd want to be doing.

Moving on, the other point I want to make in this particular debate — there are so many points — is this: In all my years in public life, when landlords or tenants have come to see me when it comes to problems — I'll talk about landlords; I won't talk about tenants in this particular part. You know, because you get it as well as I do at your constituency office, landlord X comes walking through the door and they're jumping this high, they're just madder than you can bet. Why? Because they've got a problem tenant and they're not able to deal adequately with the tenant. The rent is not being paid, there may be damage happening inside the apartment, there may be all kinds of problems happening, and the landlord is not able to deal with it.

The problem is that those issues are not contained within the Rent Control Act; they're issues contained within the Landlord and Tenant Act. If the government was coming forward and trying to find some way to balance the need to protect the tenant so that the tenant is not abused by the landlord but also respecting the right of the landlord to make sure his unit is safe and the rent is being paid and that if the conditions are not being met by the tenant there's some way of being able to deal with it, I have no problem as a New Democrat dealing with it. I think that would be fair.

I come from a community where most of the apartments in my constituency, as they would be in most northern members' constituencies, are the people next door who own a building and have one unit in their basement or have one unit upstairs or the people two doors down from me, the Boulangers, who have one apartment upstairs in their building. If you get a bad tenant, that's a problem.

If the government wants to come forward and say, "Let's find a way to deal with that," let's do that. One thing you'd be able to do that would be quite simple — and I suggested it when we were in government, and we had moved partway to addressing it but unfortunately didn't have the time to finish the work we had started — is to take a look at what you do when somebody is on social assistance or on welfare and, for whatever reason, they're not paying their rent. Is there a mechanism to do

what they do in public housing, which is that the rent is extracted from the payment before it goes to the individual?

I do not advocate that you do that up front. I believe all people should be given the right and the ability to pay their bills on their own without the intervention of the state. But if there's a repeat, a person who is constantly not paying rent, and they happen to be on social assistance, maybe we need to take a look at some means by which the rent is paid directly by the city or province when the cheque is issued, and what's left to the tenant is the money that's left over from the rent, if that's a problem.

I feel for the small landlord. That's a real problem. I've got a gentleman in my riding right now who happens to be out of work because he has been sick for a couple of years. His only source of income is a very small pension he gets, I believe, from the Canada pension plan and what he has from the rent on one unit. He now has a problem tenant. He can't get the tenant out. It's going to take 30 to 60 days by the time he finishes the process of kicking the tenant out. The tenant has refused to pay the gas and has refused to pay the hydro, and consequently the gas and hydro have been shut down in the building. Not only the tenant who hasn't paid but the guy who lives upstairs has got no hot water. The person refuses to pay the bill, and the landlord doesn't have the money to pay for it. How do you deal with that? Those are real issues, and if the government wants to deal with those issues, let's deal with them, but don't come into this House with rent control legislation such as this, because you won't be dealing with what is really going on here.

The other thing I want to comment on are the changes being made when it comes to mobile home parks or, as we call them in real terms, trailer parks. The government is moving in three areas when it comes to trailer parks. I think both tenants and landlords should be wary of what this government is doing.

One of the things they're doing under section 107 in the act is that the landlord can't charge a new tenant more than what the rent was the last time. Let me say this the other way. Under section 107 of the act, what you're doing is putting it under the rent control system, which I guess is not a problem. Let me rephrase that. I was going one way and I decided to go the other; I've got to bring them together some way so it's a nice little package.

The point is that what's happening with mobile home parks is that they're going to be treated just like all apartments out there. If I own a trailer and I'm renting the land from the landlord in the trailer park, there will be no rent control if I happen to move that unit out, and that is not right. The landlord, when he or she develops the trailer park, calculates in what the allowable rent should be and does the planning accordingly, and to leave some tenants without any protection at all isn't right.

You're going to have a situation in trailer parks where some people will be under a form of rent control and other people who are moving in will have no rent control. You're going to have a hodgepodge within the trailer park. You're going to have lot 32, where they're paying \$100 a month, and lot 32B — where I used to live at one

time — because the trailer has come out and the new one has gone in, paying \$150 for the same space of land, the same use of services, and they live next door. I don't think that's right.

I don't advocate that you take rent control away, but I think you need to make sure the rules apply the same to the people within the trailer park, because what you'll end up with is a hodgepodge of rents in the end. When trailers start to be moved out and moved back in in some of these trailer parks, you're going to end up over a period of years with a hodgepodge of rents. The one guy over here is going to pay \$100 and the lady down the street is going to pay \$120 and this person across the street will be \$150. It will be all over the map.

Then you're going to have tenants fighting among each other, saying, "How come you're only paying \$150 and I'm paying \$200?" or whatever the case might be, and then the landlords get caught up in the middle of that. I don't think that's good for anybody. What you need to do is make sure there's some stability when it comes to the rents being charged in the trailer parks so that at least you get away from that part of the confrontation and you keep it fair for individuals.

One thing they're doing in the legislation that I've got to say is probably not a bad idea is something I've long advocated for when it comes to trailer parks; that is, if the city of Timmins — in the case of the city of Timmins, where I come from, or the town of Iroquois Falls or Matheson — orders a trailer park to build a new sewer system, build a new water system, redo a road, whatever it might be, the landlord will be able, under this legislation, to factor into the rent the cost of doing those capital improvements.

I think that's not a bad idea, because one of the problems new owners of trailer parks have had is, a trailer park has been built, it's 20 years old, its infrastructure is getting run down and not maybe working as well as it needs to, and the landlord doesn't have the money to go out and do the reinvestment he or she needs to do to bring the trailer park up to standard. The trailer park owner might be trying to do the right thing, but if he or she can't recoup the money on the capital improvements, that gets to be a real problem over the long term. It means work doesn't get done.

I had to deal with one trailer park where that happened. We had what was called Elliot's trailer park in the city of Timmins. It was an old trailer park that had been sold a couple of times. In the end, to make a long story short, the guy didn't have the money and the sewer system broke down. Raw sewage was going into the creek at the back of the trailer park. Finally the Ministry of Health shut it down. They said, "Listen, if you can't run this thing right, shut it down or do the reparations that need to be done." The guy couldn't afford it and the trailer park was shut down.

Luckily, I worked with the city, and we made an arrangement with the trailer park next door. Mr Dan Villars and his wife, Shari, bought the trailer park and made one bigger trailer park and changed the entire sewage system and brought everything up to standard. They're now building the trailer park extension between what used to be Sharidan's trailer park, Ruttan, and what

is now this new trailer park between Elliot's and Sharidan's.

What you end up with here in a case like that is not a bad idea. In that case, if Mr Villars had been allowed, he could have factored into his rents existing at Elliot's the kinds of repairs that were done to the trailer park. I think that would have been fair for the tenants, because, as a former trailer owner, I want to make sure I've got good water and sewer. I moved a trailer out of one trailer park because the water was so bad you couldn't wash your clothes in it; it stank because it had a lot of groundwater in it. The owner at the time of the trailer park couldn't get the work done because he didn't have the money to do it and there was no way of being able to recoup it within the confines of the rent control system at the time.

We addressed that as a government by allowing capital improvements under rental buildings, but unfortunately it was never done under trailer parks. The government is moving in that direction, and for that particular one you can give them some credit. That's the good news.

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The bad news for trailer park owners is that when Mr Villars down the road on Pine Street builds his new trailer park, which he's doing now, and he starts to install trailers on it, he will be limited as to what he can charge when it comes to the installation of brand-new trailers. As it is now, trailer park owners are allowed, when you move a trailer in, to set it up and charge a fee and to profit from the construction and the fixing of the installation: pouring the cement slab, putting the sewer and water to it, putting the lawn in and putting in the driveway.

I don't understand this. This is a government that says they are the be-all and end-all of the market. In this particular case, and I don't know why, they're saying: "We're going to limit them. The only thing the trailer park owner can charge for is the actual cost." I don't know why you're doing that and I don't think that's a very good idea at all. If somebody's developing a trailer park, it's a very long-term investment. One way they're able to get some dollars to reinvest back into the trailer park to improve the infrastructure is to make a few dollars on installation. They don't make a lot; most trailer park owners are pretty reputable when it comes to that. I say "most," because there are some bad apples out there.

I've got two minutes left and I will just wrap up on this particular point. Let's be clear. What is this government doing? They are scrapping rent control. No ifs, ands or buts about it. I understand it. This is a government that doesn't believe in any form of control.

Mr Wildman: Even self-control.

Mr Bisson: Good point. They don't even have self-control. But mark my words, you will pay the price. Tenants in this province have already started to mobilize. They will start to organize and start to mobilize, and come the next provincial election, if I was the member in Scarborough or the member in High Park-Swansea or wherever there are low vacancy rates and you have the possibility that rents will go up — I'll tell you, those people aren't going to be happy with you.

I make a note of one thing. The member for Scarborough East or Centre — I always forget your riding,

sir; I apologize for that: Scarborough East — said: "People are in favour of this. I've gone around my constituency and talked to people and they're in favour of it." No. I've been in your constituency and I held a number of public meetings there, some of them well attended, some of them not as well attended, where people came forward and said —

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): Low.

Mr Bisson: Yes, one meeting was low, the other ones were high. That happens in this business. What happened was people said quite the contrary. I've got to tell you about one particular meeting. I held a meeting in the city of Timmins where we advertised for a week that we were going to have a meeting on this very issue. We advertised in the paper, on the radio and on the TV to let everybody know it was going on. It was a public meeting, televised live through the community events channel.

You wouldn't believe the interest on this particular issue. It is the one issue that I've had the biggest response from in the city of Timmins since I've been elected as the member for Cochrane South. We had young and old; we had from one range to the other. In the end, you know what they said? "Don't scrap rent control." And 70% of the people there were landlords, not tenants. They said, "Our problem is the Landlord and Tenant Act, Gilles, it is not rent control." Those were supporters of your own party. Those were card-carrying Conservative members from the riding of Cochrane South.

I was very surprised, because I thought, "Hey, the landlords have organized and they're here to say I'm doing something wrong in protecting rent control," but they said quite the opposite. So don't kid yourself. People aren't in favour of this.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Gilchrist: I'm pleased to respond to the member for Cochrane South. Let me just say that contrary to the two or three times you may have been in the riding — at one meeting I think you had a grand total of six people who showed up, and one of them was the former NDP member — I've canvassed every building, I've met with the tenant associations, I've met with the people, who tell me they don't like the status quo. I'm going to tell you that they want to talk about issues such as privatizing, in the form of making their own condos or co-ops. They want to see movement. They don't want the status quo.

You spent a lot of time in your address talking about why we have a shortage of buildings. You made it sound as if the only suggestion on how to make buildings more profitable for the landlords was to cut wages. That's a typical NDP response. Of course, you'd have to pick on the worker. You left aside the fact that the greatest problem landlords face is the duplication, the red tape and all sorts of other bureaucratic hurdles they have to cross. Development charges: We've taken that on. You're going to see a more positive attitude, because we've come to a more reasonable balance in what the municipalities can charge.

The other red tape in terms of the planning process: Under your government official plan applications took 22 months. Under our Planning Act they're averaging three months in the first seven months since that bill was

passed, one seventh the amount of time. Obviously, in all that time period the person who wants to build that building is paying interest on the cost of the land and the cost of the engineering surveys and everything else they've done.

You've got a number of other things. Under Bill 106 you can have a chance for municipalities to assess apartments fairly. Right now, the member opposite knows full well that apartments are taxed at least twice the value of the same-size private homes, and they didn't do anything about that; in fact in Toronto it's as high as four times as great. If you cut property taxes by one half, you're talking about a \$100-a-month discount off the current rent. Talk about making it more affordable. We've made the legislative changes to do that, but we're not doing it with blinders on. It's a multifaceted approach to make it more practical for tenants.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm someone who has been around the track a few times on this rent control routine. I went through both permutations of the NDP rent control, went through the hearings all across the province. I said to one of the New Democratic members at the time, who is no longer with us, "You know, we'll revisit this within five years." I suspect over there you will be revisiting this before the next election.

It's easy to have these grand plans to get rid of rent control, to do these wonderful things in the name of free enterprise. But if the vacancy rate in the city of Toronto becomes lower and lower, which I expect it will, and there are no buildings being built, which there won't be, you will find yourself in a position where the rents are going out of control, where people will not be able to find any affordable accommodation in this city. If that happens, if the market plays like that — and it has already started — you'll be back. That's what will happen, because you will not be able to face an electorate under that situation.

Rather than do that, why don't you come up with some real, solid rent control legislation that will protect those who need affordable accommodation? That would make sense. As it is, you're just encouraging — and I'm happy about it — all those on fixed incomes, retirees, to come to the wonderful place of Elliot Lake, where we have affordable accommodation in the best retirement city in Ontario. We're happy that you're asking people to come there.

Mr Wildman: I understand the comments of my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin. Elliot Lake has become a refuge for many retirees who are trying to escape the high cost of accommodation in other parts of the province; not just to escape those, but to actually come to stay in the north and enjoy a very high quality of life in our part of the province. It is true that vacancy rates are somewhat higher in Elliot Lake than they are in other cities in this province, but even if all those vacancies could be filled immediately, it would not make a dent in the problems that we are going to see come out of this legislation.

Like the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, I have seen a number of attempts at rent control in this province — rent review and then rent control — by Tory, Liberal and

New Democratic governments. I can say without any fear of contradiction that this attempt by this government to euphemistically paint an attack on tenants as protection for tenants, to destroy any ability that tenants have to protect themselves from rent increases in the long run, to protect themselves from the vagaries of the market, will be defeated, and this government or a future government will be back, as my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin predicted, revisiting the issue of high rents and how to protect tenants, because this bill does not provide protection for tenants.

1700

Mr Rollins: I think somewhere along the line we've got to look at that inventory of non-existing new stock that's in our province. There's none here. There's been none here in the last five or six years. There has been no new development. Somewhere along the line it's wearing out, and it's wearing out at the cost of not being replaced, and we've got to take a good look at it.

The member over there stood and said, "We can bring in some legislation that would afford to make sure we could cut the cost down." He wanted to dictate to the people who were either working or the people who were buying or selling that property. I don't believe you can legislate to tell people exactly how much an hour you're going to let them pay them, how much an acre you're going to buy that property for, how many dollars you're going to spend to put the bricks and mortar up and then turn around and tell the tenants who are there how much you're going to charge them and then turn around and they add a little bit more on to it and say, "Now you can't raise the cost of it."

Somewhere along the line the system has got to be so that at least the owner can get back a reasonable return from the tenant and the tenant knows the rent isn't going to go bouncing up ridiculously. I think we will put into place a piece of legislation that will at least balance the field. It'll put it a little bit more level. You can't sit there and say, "Yes, it's good now," because if it's good now, how come they're not building new ones? They're not. How come the rents are being raised that sometimes people can't afford? I think we've addressed the problem. We've taken away some development charges. We've made the thing start to get closer to being right. It may not be perfect but it'll be better than what it is at the present time.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: I would just say in reverse order, to the member for Quinte, that there was a cap. There is presently a cap when it comes to rents now, and the argument you made earlier was that you should leave it the way that it is. That's what you were arguing. The present system has a cap and that's the way it works.

To the member for Scarborough East, yes, I visited your riding. I went to a number of public meetings when I was the housing critic and I can assure that the majority of people I've talked to in your riding, including the former member — which one was it? I can't remember now.

Mr Gilchrist: How soon they forget.

Mr Bisson: There are so many.

Mr Gilchrist: Not from the NDP, there aren't.

Mr Bisson: Yes, though from Scarborough there were. I can tell you definitely he was opposed to what your government is doing.

In all seriousness, I talked to people across this province when I was the housing critic, not only in your riding, sir, but in ridings across this province: in Sarnia, Hamilton, Windsor, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Kingston, Ottawa, wherever it was. I met with tenants and I would just go and canvass their buildings. They weren't pre-arranged meetings in some cases because sometimes that's hard to do. You told people what was going on and you asked people for their views. They were deathly afraid of what your government is doing with rent control. People understand this. It's a very basic issue. What really matters to individuals' lives, from where they're at, is that they've got a roof over their heads, that they have an income so they can put food on the table and be able to afford a decent lifestyle with whatever is left over.

One of the problems with this legislation is that you're putting that at risk. The minute a person leaves an apartment and has to move, because of a job or whatever it is, into another unit, rents will go up. If you're in an area where you have low vacancy rates like the city of Toronto has, I can guarantee you rates will go up and that will affect the pocketbook. I'll tell you, at that point people will not support what you have done with this legislation. You'll pay the price come the next election. It's as simple as that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of Bill 96, the new Tenant Protection Act. In his introductory comments to the standing committee on general government on Monday August 19, 1996, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Al Leach, well described the conflicting views of tenants and landlords as "just give us everything we want" style solutions.

The minister pointed out that when obvious problems are brought to the attention of tenants and landlords and when we ask for solutions to these problems, tenant advocates suggest imposing absolute, ultrastrict rent controls that will ensure that a property owner can't get a dime. Landlords on the other hand suggest getting rid of the entire rent control system and all the regulations that go with it.

Our job in establishing a new rent control policy is first to ensure that we clearly understand all aspects of the issue by taking into consideration the views of the many varying groups across the province. To this end, the standing committee on general government travelled throughout the province and heard from over 220 delegations, each well representing their specific views. The delegations included such diverse groups as tenants' associations, landlords' associations, seniors' groups, churches, legal clinics, development companies, student groups, various types of construction companies, municipalities, social planning councils and other various groups and individuals.

After listening to the various delegations, often, I might add, presenting diametrically opposing points of

view, it was obvious that regardless of what policy we established, we could not possibly satisfy everyone. Our job in establishing the new rent control policy is, to quote the minister, "to fix the system in a way that is fair and fix it in a way that is balanced." I believe our policy in Bill 96 accomplishes this goal.

The problems resulting from the current system are extremely severe. Over 10% of all rental stock needs substantial repair work and more than \$10 billion. Let me repeat that: Over \$10 billion in repairs is needed for rental buildings across the province. New rental units are not being constructed. Only 20 private sector rental units were built in the city of Toronto in 1995. The former government's housing policy resulted in Ontario growing into one of the largest landlords in the free world, the second-largest in North America, responsible for over 84,000 units.

The government was in direct competition with the private sector in apartment construction. This, combined with unrealistic rent controls, not only resulted in no rental construction being undertaken by the private sector, but we actually drove many small and medium-sized developers out of the industry altogether. In effect, we have been in direct business competition with the very people we count on to create jobs and pay taxes.

The members of this government clearly understand that we cannot continue the cycle of building and being the landlord of hundreds of new projects while at the same time enforcing rigid controls on the private sector and then expect the private sector companies to be motivated to start building new stock.

Without fundamental changes to the government's existing policies, private companies have no basic motivation to start building new rental units. I can tell you from my own experiences that members who believe the government can construct rental units at a lower per unit cost than a competitive private sector are naïve. I am raising this aspect because rent control and new rental unit construction are interrelated. Private sector firms will only start building new rental units when they believe they are being treated fairly. To ensure new rental units are being constructed by private sector firms, the government must remove itself from direct competition in the industry and allow the natural forces of the marketplace to be re-established.

I consider the proposals of Bill 96 to be very reasonable. The framework of the new rent control policy will allow landlords the right to set rents for vacant apartments at what they consider to be fair market value and not be limited by a provincially set standard. One of the major concerns tenants expressed in response to this point is that they believe there is now an incentive for landlords to harass existing tenants into vacating their apartments, thereby opening the door for the landlord to rent the unit to a new tenant at a significantly higher rent. The possibility of facing a \$50,000 fine for harassing existing tenants to move out will force landlords to think twice before they start harassing anyone. Few landlords could sustain \$50,000 fines, and they will not jeopardize losing their property merely to pay harassment fines for the difference in rental income they would potentially gain. It simply isn't worth it.

1710

As well, Bill 96 maintains protection for tenants by re-establishing the rent control guideline at the lowest rate it has been in Ontario in 20 years. The rent control guideline will continue at its current rate of 2.8%.

I am very pleased with the new method of settling disputes. Currently disputes are settled in court. Our court system is overworked and backlogged. We are wasting millions of dollars in legal expenses because we have historically used the court system to settle what in many instances are minor problems. The proposal to establish a simpler, faster, less expensive and less intimidating adjudication or arbitration process will be welcomed by all parties.

As well, the existing government policies are piecemeal and confusing, covering eight different acts, including the Rent Control Act, the Landlord and Tenant Act, the Rental Housing Protection Act, the Municipal Amendment Act, the Residents' Rights Act, the Land Lease Statute Law Amendment Act, as well as the Building Code Act and the Planning Act. What we are proposing is a Tenant Protection Act which consolidates everything into one package that is fair to tenants, landlords and taxpayers.

In summary, the government believes that tenants must be protected from unfair rent increases. It believes that buildings must be properly maintained. We also believe that the private sector must be encouraged to build more rental units and that the entire system must be simplified and made less expensive for the taxpayer. Bill 96 accomplishes all of these goals and I believe that it establishes a system which is fair to all sides.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr Sergio: I congratulate the member for her presentation, but I have just a couple of points. I have to say that the legislation as presented is aimed at providing tenants with continuous rental protection, but indeed it doesn't do that. What it simply does is eliminate whatever protection tenants presently have within the present legislation. It does not protect tenants any more once they move out of that particular unit. So we cannot call that tenant protection any longer.

What we have is a set of guidelines, if you will, that will force tenants to stay within their own present apartments, without taking into consideration the possibility that somewhere along the line, be it a family, be it a single person, a student, a senior, an unemployed, whoever he or she may be, they may have to move for reasons other than simply wanting to move: relocation, job changes, school is over, the family is getting bigger, the senior is changing. For whatever particular reason, they've got to go, and once they leave that apartment, their tenant protection is gone.

The legislation, with all due respect to the members of the government, does not offer them that protection, and I think they know that. But the thing is, they have to proceed and support this legislation. With all due respect, in all the hearings we had, the over 200 presentations — I attended every day for those five weeks of hearings — no one said, "We can accept this legislation." So I hope when it really comes down, changes will be made to make it better.

Mr Wildman: I listened carefully to the member for Durham-York and I must say that it must be wonderful to have such blind faith. To believe that a provision in the bill against harassment that provides for a \$50,000 fine will protect the rights of tenants from harassment is to misunderstand the realities of the relationship between tenant and landlord.

I know there are many, many good landlords, small landlords and large, who treat their tenants well. Unfortunately, there are many who do not. In those kinds of situations, no matter what it says in the legislation, the tenant will not be able to protect herself or himself. No tenant will even risk the possibility of retribution by complaining in that kind of situation. That landlord does not have to worry about a \$50,000 fine, because there will be no complaint made against him.

I don't understand why the member, who obviously has thought about this carefully, doesn't take that into account. These provisions, first under what was then called the Landlord and Tenant Act and then the Residential Tenancies Act, which subsequently was changed and moved to the current rent control situation, were provided because there were reasons. They weren't just thought up by some unscrupulous, nefarious administrator who convinced an unthinking politician to implement them. They were put in place because there were indeed serious problems that tenants faced because they were being harassed and were vulnerable to the unscrupulous demands of some unfair landlords. They didn't just appear. They happened because they were needed, and to simply write them off doesn't mean they're no longer needed.

Mr Gilchrist: I'd like to compliment my colleague and thank her for her comments in support of this bill.

As usual, the members opposite have missed the point completely. To stand in this House and fearmonger and cause concern to the seniors and the less-well-off people in this province, who are living in public housing in particular, with these sorts of absolutely scandalous and outrageous comments is really unbecoming.

The fact of the matter is, with 120,000 more people living in Ontario between the years 1995 and 1996, a grand total of 1,400 apartment units were built. Where do the members opposite propose that these people live?

Your bill is a failure, sir, an abject, utter and complete failure. It has not served tenants. It has not served landlords. It has not served the taxpayers who would be earning property tax on all of those vast tracts of land that are already zoned to be developed into multi-unit apartment buildings but will not be because nobody can make a cent of profit. I'm not talking about one year down the road. I'm saying five, 10, 20 years after building the building, there is no chance of making a profit.

While the idea of profit may be a dirty word to you, the fact of the matter is it also means no jobs in the construction industry when they don't build those buildings. It means no revenue to the municipalities, as I mentioned, which would allow the addition of new services or augmenting the existing services. Those are the sacrifices you've made the rest of this province incur as a result of your very ill-considered bill, which itself was just a continuation of a lot of woolly-headed thinking in response to a phenomenon in the mid-1970s, in a

minority government where quite frankly the government of the day was blackmailed into coming up with a piece of legislation that solved a Toronto problem.

That is not the case today. The law of supply and demand will work. The vacancy rate has doubled in Toronto since our election, and I'm sure the bill will serve its purpose.

1720

Mr Michael Brown: That was an interesting set of comments from the member for Scarborough East, but I too want to share a few comments on the speech.

One of the things I know is that tenants are a little bit different from somebody who rents a store. In commercial real estate, we know that vacancy rates change extraordinarily. We know that sometimes during a recession in this province commercial real estate had vacancy rates of over 30%. However, the difference in residential real estate is that it's somebody's home, somebody lives there, somebody who has to have a place to live. If only the market is to decide how things happen, there will be people who cannot afford to live in their home. That is what this legislation does. This is not the commercial real estate market; it is a market that, especially at the low end, needs protection.

No one builds an apartment building to serve low-income people. You cannot make a cent doing that; we know that. We also know that we have to encourage more units to be built. I would say to you at this time that under this legislation you are not going to see any more buildings built than you otherwise would; it isn't going to happen. People are going to continue to invest in condominium projects and conversions. I suspect you'll have fewer apartments a year from now.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham-York, you have two minutes.

Mrs Munro: Thank you to those of you who have chosen to comment on these remarks. I would like to begin by summarizing some of the comments that have been made by various members, as they reveal so much of the issue this legislation addresses; that is, the effort to make sure there is a balance between the needs of the tenant and the need to provide new units. That is precisely the kind of thing the member for Algoma-Manitoulin referred to, and I think that is really the critical issue on which this piece of legislation pivots.

The member for Yorkview referred to the need for protection. Very clearly, that's exactly what is suggested in this legislation, that it will provide protection. There is an understanding that people do require this.

The member for Algoma referred to the \$50,000 fine. It seems to me that even in the face of much more rigorous legislation, tenants have been able to work together, have been able to become an extremely strong voice, so I really feel the \$50,000 fine is certainly going to provide a sober second thought for any landlord.

The member for Scarborough East referred to the need for providing incentive for construction. This is clearly spelled out by many, many others —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Further debate?

Mr Sergio: I am pleased to join the debate on Bill 96, the so-called Tenant Protection Act. Let me say at the

outset that I will not try to address my remarks solely in support of tenants or landlords, but let me say this at the outset so we clear this up outright: Landlords, big or small, are entitled to make a profit on their investment. The proposed legislation does not include small buildings with three units or less and also does not include new buildings. But if landlords, large or small, are entitled to make a profit — and yes, they should be making a profit — we should also take into consideration the small investor, even a homeowner who has finally managed to pay for a single unit and wants to support himself or herself or the family through some additional income by renting a basement apartment or a second-storey flat or unit. They should be offered protection from bad tenants and also should be allowed to make a profit, because they have already invested in that particular unit.

Having said that, let me address the bill itself as I see it. We had three weeks of hearings, one week in Toronto here at Queen's Park and two weeks throughout Ontario, and we travelled in many parts and heard over 200 people, including developers, tenants, tenants' groups, individuals, planners, you name it. Even we ourselves recognize that some changes are needed. We are not saying that the present legislation is totally fair for both the landlords and the tenants; we recognize that some changes are needed, are possible and should be made. But we also recognize that what we heard during those three weeks of hearings is exactly the way we see it: that the bill as proposed does not do what it is intended to do, to give tenants protection.

If I were to say — I'll try to smile on this one, Mr Speaker — that the legislation as proposed is misleading, it would be improper in the House, and therefore I won't say it. But it has been introduced with two main purposes in mind: to provide continuous rent control for tenants, and to possibly give the opportunity to developers to go on the market and build more units that would be affordable and yet would allow them to make a profit. Unfortunately, the legislation does not do either one. What the legislation does is eliminate whatever control tenants in Ontario enjoy now under the present legislation.

On June 25, 1996, the minister introduced the legislation and then we had the three weeks of hearings. He was hoping that he would come back in the fall of 1996, introduce the legislation and have it approved by this House. That, as we know, did not happen.

Some previous speakers alluded to the fact that they would combine the other six pieces of legislation into one and make it better for tenants. It is not, as the minister said in his release when the bill was introduced, that he was consolidating six other major pieces of legislation into one and making it a better tenant protection package. With all due respect to the member who alluded to that, they are removing those six pieces of legislation, not consolidating them. They are totally, completely removing them from existence. How can we say, then, that the changes in Bill 96 as proposed are going to make things better for tenants?

It is most unfortunate that prior to the election of 1995 the Premier made two particular, very straightforward promises with respect to rent control. He said that rent control would continue and that any change to rent

control legislation, rent control reform, would have to result in lower rents. Those are two major, totally broken promises when it comes to providing protection for tenants in Ontario. We did not hear from one deputation, individuals, groups, landlords or developers, that this would be the case. How can it happen that we are going to have a reduction in rent when you eliminate rent control? This will not happen.

1730

I must read a couple of quotes from the news release after the bill was introduced by the minister. He said: "We are proposing a complete overhaul to the current system. We want to create a new tenant protection package that works for tenants, landlords and all Ontario taxpayers."

Mr Leach said, "The government plans to create a new Tenant Protection Act by consolidating," as I said before — in his communiqué, the minister said the act consolidates six pieces of legislation: the Rent Control Act, the Landlord and Tenant Act, the Rental Housing Protection Act, the Municipal Amendment Act, the Residents' Rights Act and the Land Lease Statute Law Amendment Act.

The following is curious, if not hypocritical: "We are looking at the whole picture," the minister says. "We realize that in order to protect tenants, improve maintenance, create new supply and strike a fair balance for everyone, we have to look at more than just rent regulation."

It says, "Mr Leach stressed that the new law will continue to protect tenants from unfair rent increases by keeping annual rent control guidelines." If I were allowed to say it in this House, I would say this is totally misleading and lying to the tenants of Ontario, but I won't say that, because I'm not allowed to say so in the House.

What the minister failed to say publicly to the tenants of Ontario — let me say that all the tenants, both individuals and groups, that we heard during the submissions were not uneducated or silly or stupid. They were well familiar with the legislation proposed by the government, by Mr Leach. They are not being fooled by what the minister has been saying even in his communiqué. What he is saying indeed is, "We are keeping the 2.8% guideline, and we are going from 3%, which presently exists, to 4%," which represents a 1% increase from the NDP era, allowing directly, without any problem whatsoever, rent increases of 6.8% per year.

The minister says, "Tenants will continue to be able to challenge illegal rent increases." Well, hold on a second. That's the part tenants don't like — they don't like to be lied to — because once the tenant removes himself from that particular unit, the new tenant has no protection in that unit. There is no control in that unit. Is the minister trying to fool us, trying to fool tenants in Ontario? There is no protection, as he said in his communiqué, from illegal rent increases. The fact is that once a tenant leaves the particular unit, that unit falls within the new act guidelines, with no protection, no control whatsoever.

Who, even in the workforce, is getting a straight, without any challenge, 6.8% increase? Who? No one. Plus there are some other clauses in there which say that if you have extra costs that you can justify, then your

rent will even — do I have 173 minutes or is something wrong with the clock, Mr Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr Sergio: It's correct now?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, it is.

Mr Sergio: I can start all over again; I have no problem with that.

When it comes to what the minister was saying, we have to be honest, we have to be truthful with tenants, because they are the ones being affected and they are the ones the new legislation should be taking care of. Let me repeat that once this legislation is approved, there is no protection for tenants in Ontario.

What the tenants were saying during the public hearings was that if this legislation is allowed to proceed and is approved by the government, this will mean the beginning of the end for protection of tenants and rent control in Ontario. For many, I have to say this is the end of a dream. Who can say no? Who can be opposed to that when so many tenants can no longer afford the luxury of moving at will from one place to another? They will have to move for whatever reason may happen to be causing them to move, from east to west, north to south, or even within an existing neighbourhood.

It is most unfortunate also that the minister has chosen to say that the housing crisis is a phoney crisis. I say it's most unfortunate because the government and the minister do not recognize the fact that there is a waiting list of 30,000, and growing, of people waiting to get into affordable units. That spells a waiting period of some five years or more. I'm asking you and the government and the minister if it is fair that we should tell needy people — I'm talking needy people — "Go ahead, make your applications, and we will call you five years down the road when a unit will be ready for you." This is most disheartening for tenants in Ontario, especially when we have about 42% of seniors occupying rental units, most of them subsidized units.

It is totally unfair when the government says, "We are producing a document that is going to be better than what we have now." It is totally impossible. Let me tell you that especially seniors living in rental units are living in fear, because they will be trapped. They will lose the freedom to move from one place to another. They are living in fear that they may be subject to undue intimidation, harassment, even though you may say the legislation provides that harassment is not allowed. Take it to court and prove that yes, indeed, this was harassment. Most tenants don't even know how to go about that. They don't have the luxury, the money, to do exactly that.

Plus, as has been said before, many tenants don't want to bring any problems they may have into the open, for fear of reprisal. They know that if they can barely afford to stay in the existing unit, they won't be able to find another unit that will be affordable, because wherever they go, if they find a unit that is empty, they will have to pay whatever price the landlord wants for that particular unit.

1740

Let me say that it is a total fallacy when the minister and the government say: "Well, you negotiate with the new landlord. You negotiate your own monthly rent,

whatever that is." I wonder where you're going to find a landlord, when the minister recognized that we have a zero vacancy rate in Metropolitan Toronto, who will negotiate their monthly rental. Let's be fair. Let's be honest with tenants in Ontario.

As I said at the outset, landlords should be making a profit on their investment. The large developer, the large investor, the small one, the individual one, should be making a profit on their investment. But it is also our responsibility, the responsibility of this government, to provide continuous protection for all tenants in Ontario. I can't support Bill 96, we can't support it, developers can't support it, tenants can't support it, because it does not do that.

Even during the hearings we had big, huge developers and builders saying, "If this is not acceptable to tenants or us either, why is the government proceeding with this legislation?" Nobody knows. Developers said, "In order for us to build more affordable units, a number of things will have to be done on top of eliminating rent control completely." We said, "What else would you like to see the government do, Mr Developer, for you to go on the open market and provide affordable units?"

They said, "you would have to eliminate the federal taxes, the provincial taxes. You would have to provide cheaper land. On top of that, you would have to provide a subsidy." I mean, what else do they want? On top of that — and we just approved Bill 98, I believe, which deals with development charges — they said, "You have to drop development charges." With all due respect, what do we give to tenants?

Developers came and said: "On top of what we are now making legally, 6.8%, if you want us to go on the market and build more affordable units, you've got to remove completely provincial sales taxes, federal sales taxes, and provide us with very cheap lands. You've got to reduce completely the development charges. On top of that, you've got to give us a subsidy."

If this doesn't do it, and they said this doesn't do it, why continue to press on with the elimination of rent control as it is? As I said before, we should strive to make the system fairer for both, but in the eyes of eliminating rent control completely, leaving tenants with no protection whatsoever, this legislation should not proceed, should not have been introduced. It does not do what the title of the proposed legislation claims to do, does not do what the minister said and does not do what the now Premier said prior to the election. How can it? How can it provide long-lasting protection for tenants when you are removing those barriers?

The other thing is this, and I don't think we have addressed it at all, or to any extent: On top of the 6.8% that landlords are allowed to charge tenants without any question, landlords are allowed extraordinary operating costs, which means that any tenant, present or future, under the new proposed legislation would have to absorb the cost of an increase in property taxes. Should I deviate, Mr Speaker, and go into more property taxes with the downloading? I think that would be an issue on its own. I don't have to tell you the amount this would represent. The landlords can pass to tenants the increase in property taxes, and they will; increases, for example,

in hydro rates, in water rates, in any other thing they call extraordinary operating costs.

How much more the tenant is going to pay if he has to leave an existing unit. The tenant has to move out, go to another place, perhaps pay hundreds of dollars more than what he's paying now. On top of that, they will never know what the final rent will be because the landlord may come and say: "Look, this is not my problem. The municipality now is charging me more because of hydro or water rates; they just increased the rates." That poor tenant has no recourse.

There is no recourse for tenants, Mr Premier, Mr Minister, because they are extraordinary costs brought about by the downloading by the government on to the municipalities, the municipalities downloading on to the landlord, and the landlord on to only one person: the tenant. That means there is indeed no assurance of how much at the end that tenant is going to end up paying. So now not only do they have to live in fear that they can't move from their existing units, they're living in fear that, "I have to go to another building, I have to pay more, and at the end, how much more will I have to absorb because of extraordinary costs?" I think it's totally unfair.

Some of the previous speakers have addressed the concerns of the tenants. One of the speakers said: "What did the tenants say? They didn't complain too much." My goodness, if the tenants didn't complain, there is one very wrong thing: It means we did not listen to those hundreds of tenants who came, day in and day out, telling the members of the committee that what we are proposing doesn't do them any good.

What they were telling the members of the committee was that this new proposed tenant protection package will lead to larger and more frequent increases. It will lead to unfair and unreasonable evictions. As I have said before, the bad tenant has got to go, no problem; I'm in favour of supporting landlords small or large who have problems with someone abusing the unit.

Tenants are in fear that this will not provide better maintenance of a building, that fewer repairs instead of more will be done, and that this will provide a complete loss of rental units to other uses and will add, I have to say, to homelessness in Metro and in Ontario.

To those members, I would say they did not listen to the plight of the tenants during the three weeks of hearings we had, one here and two throughout Ontario. This is what the tenants were suggesting, and I want to ask the members on the government side, what is wrong with this request? The requests are fair, reasonable, and indeed, if applied to the proposed legislation, would provide some tenant protection, as we should, and the legislation is entitled to supposedly do that.

They would say that rent increases must be set by government guidelines. Bill 96 does not do that.

Tenant and tenant groups are saying that above-guideline rent increases must have a cap. Who can argue with that? Tenants must know how much their rent is going to be, so there should be a cap.

1750

They say that rent must be linked to maintenance. I think that's fair. If a slum landlord does not maintain the building, why should a tenant be living in those condi-

tions when a landlord fails to maintain the building because he wants the tenants to get out? That's totally unfair.

Tenants have rights. Tenants must have the right to stay in their home without fear of being evicted unfairly or just because their lease runs out. Why not? Why shouldn't we offer that protection to tenants?

Also, tenants must be entitled to their privacy.

Tenants must be covered under tenants' rights legislation.

These are some of the things tenants told the committee during the three weeks of hearings. Why shouldn't we provide those rights and that protection to tenants in Ontario? Is this unfair? I don't think so.

I can see I have only a couple of minutes left, and I want to rush to the conclusion.

One of the members, I think it was the member for Scarborough East, said, "Oh, please, don't throw at us this fearmongering that seniors will suffer, that seniors will be subject to rent increases and all that." Well, let me tell you, when you have a waiting list of some 30,000 and growing and when the Ministry of Housing is telling those people — I have letters on file that tenants go there and are being told: "Don't bother us. Don't call us. Don't write us. You have made your application; now you've got to wait your turn, which is going to be five years down the road. By then we'll call you." Is this fearmongering? Those are real people with real problems and real needs.

The figures don't come from me, they come from the government files. This is not fearmongering. This means truly that there hasn't been one new rental unit built at affordable prices. It's not fearmongering. It is telling the people: "You're on your own. You go and look for your affordable housing, and if you can't afford it, that's too bad." I think we have a sacrosanct responsibility to provide for those people who cannot provide for themselves, in the same way that we should allow the landlords to make a reasonable profit on their investment.

We recognize that the system is unfair in many ways, but this is not the way. Now the scale is totally tilted to one side in favour of developers, even though they will not provide any new affordable units, versus the tenants. They will be left without any protection whatsoever. I believe that waiting five years for an affordable unit is not only unfair, it is unjust. No government, present or future, should abandon those who can't look after themselves and say: "That's too bad. Go on the list and look after yourself."

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm glad to be able to comment briefly on the speech made by the member for Yorkview. As he pointed out, correctly so, this bill isn't exactly what it seems to be. In fact, when we look through this bill, we see a lot of impact that is completely different from what the government claims is going to be the case.

We know this is the end of rent controls. The government likes to pretend that rent controls are still here because, as they say, they're going to apply to those tenants as long as they live in the same apartment or the same dwelling unit. We know that just the mere fact that

over any five-year period some 70% of tenants tend to move means that controls are automatically going to come off the vast majority of properties.

Then what about the protections that now exist for tenants with respect to increases in their rent? Again, if you look at what this government is doing with this bill, they of course put it all in nice words that say: "The guideline is still going to be there. We're still going to have a little bit more room in terms of the capital." Only when you push a little bit do they point out that in fact they're increasing the ceiling under the capital cost up to 4% and that this is being given now automatically, as I understand it, to landlords when they apply for it, as opposed to them having to justify it. That means again an automatic increase that's going to take place.

That, together with some of the other changes we see in the bill we've been discussing and I know we'll have a chance to continue to discuss, will mean at the end of the day that rent controls, not just as we've known them but really in any kind of meaningful way, will disappear from Ontario. A system that has generally worked is no longer going to be with us to protect tenants and to provide that balance between tenants and landlords.

Mr Smith: It's certainly a pleasure to provide a few comments. I did, as I mentioned before, spend a considerable amount of time with the member for Yorkview in committee as we went through the pre-consultation period, and I think it's important to realize that we have some guidelines in place, both the 1996 and 1997 guidelines, fixed at 2.8%, the lowest rate in some 20 years. I think it's very important to recognize that we're moving in that direction.

One of the interesting points, and this legislation addresses it, was that across the province all landlords called for the retention of maximum rent. This is associated, my comments, in terms of the fears that rents are going to skyrocket in increase. If landlords were concerned that this scenario were going to materialize, they wouldn't have been as aggressive in terms of their position to retain maximum rents in the event that there is a soft market. From that perspective, we know that in many cases the market is already starting to dictate what it will bear in terms of rent.

As well, we heard very clearly that tenants were concerned, but we heard of outrageous stories in terms of conditions and experiences under the current system. We know the current system doesn't work. We know vacancy rates are low. We know housing stock is down. We know maintenance is poor.

The sitting-on-the-hands approach the Liberal member is proposing is not acceptable to the government. We have to move ahead. If we sit, as some have suggested, for another five years until we revisit this issue, those conditions will not improve. There are some immense challenges that have to be dealt with. In fact, the waiting list of some 30,000 individuals the member referred to speaks very loudly of the need to change the system we have in place today.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I'd like to compliment my colleague the member for Yorkview on his contribution to today's debate because he certainly has a view from a perspective in large urban Ontario that some

of us in small urban Ontario don't have, and yet we have our concerns like my colleague has.

I represent in particular the communities of Amherstburg and Leamington, where they have apartment buildings, but all the communities where they have rental accommodation. In my riding we have the largest concentration of seniors, retired people, in the province. It's on their behalf I want to speak, and I'll use an example.

My mother and her husband had a two-bedroom apartment because the two of them wanted a little more room. Now that my father is in a rest home, my mother may want to move to a smaller apartment, a one-bedroom apartment. Now she'll be afraid to do that, because all the apartment owner then has to do is jack up the cost of that accommodation. So she's going to be staying in accommodation that's a higher cost than she wants to pay because of the size of it, but she can't move to a smaller one because the rent will go up. Is it fair that if she moves, an apartment she lives in may cost half again as much or twice as much as accommodation somebody else down the hall has?

We heard during the hearings from both landlords and tenants; both objected. I still don't think the government has it right.

Mr Bisson: The member for Yorkview succinctly went directly to the point of what this legislation is all about: giving additional ability to landlords in Ontario to raise rents. That's purely and simply what this is all about.

You have to ask yourself why. Why is the government doing it? They're not exactly stupid on the other side of the House. They understand that if you take rent controls away and you leave the rents to be established according to the market, according to supply and demand, rents will go up. If the government knows that, which I know they do — they understand that taking away rent control is going to drive up the price of rents — why are they doing it? That's the question you have to ask yourself, especially when a number of key members in this government, namely the Minister of Housing himself, the Honourable Al Leach, campaigned in the last election saying he wouldn't scrap rent control.

Why are they doing it? Because they've clearly decided whose side they're on. They've said, "We are on the side of the landlord and the developers and there's nobody else in this equation." They've picked sides. I understand that because I'm a member of a government that also picked sides. We said, "We will pick the side of the tenants, because the way we see it, there are far more tenants in the province than there are landlords, and the reality is that the Rent Control Act itself allows landlords to make an adequate return on their investments in the way it's structured." We said, "We're not going to forsake tenants and put them in a situation where they in the end will be hurt because of rents going up."

We picked sides; you have. You're on the side of developers. I say you're wrong. In the end you will pay the price.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Yorkview.

Mr Sergio: I thank the members who responded to my presentation. Let me say that it boils down to one thing. It's not an issue to play politics with. We are dealing with tenant protection here; we are dealing with a piece

of legislation to which the government evidently is not attaching the due attention it should.

We are dealing with tenants' lives, many of them seniors who have nowhere to go, nowhere to turn. We are dealing with people who are on a single, low monthly income. We are dealing with single mothers with two or three kids who have nowhere to go; they can barely afford to pay the rent, buy some food, clothe the children. How can we turn a blind eye to those people? This is what it is about. This is what tenant protection legislation should be. I am totally disenchanted with the government side, which does not see the plight of those people in need.

As I said before, we know in my particular area there are tenants who are afraid, let alone seniors who are

afraid, but younger people who are afraid to voice their concerns for fear of reprisal, that they will be kicked out of their present units.

There are a number of other things I didn't have time to address, such as the loss of existing rental units to condos and other uses. The present legislation gives power to local municipalities to convert existing rental units without any problem, without any hearings, to other uses. I think that's unfair. This will compound the problem.

I thank all the members and I thank you for your time.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1804.

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Thursday 29 May 1997

Jeudi 29 mai 1997



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 29 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 29 mai 1997

*The House met at 1001.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

COURTS OF JUSTICE AND MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES TRIBUNAUX JUDICIAIRES ET LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Mr Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An act to amend the Courts of Justice Act and the Ministry of Correctional Services Act / Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires et la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i), the honourable member has 10 minutes to make his presentation.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Before getting into the bill I'd like to thank all those groups and organizations, and particularly my staff, who took the time and made the commitment to this bill, and Darrell for his dedicated hours of work.

I had met, as many members do, with a large number of groups and organizations within their community and found that there seemed to be a commonality of areas of concern. It appeared that we certainly have a large number of judges in the judicial system who perform their job adequately, and not only adequately but with great ability, and make decisions that make a great number of individuals happy.

However, as in all cases, there are a few bad apples that spoil the bunch. Through that, I had tried to find a commonality in an area where these groups from all different sectors could come to be aware of how to deal with the situation. I had met and come up with groups such as the one I am about to read here:

"The occurrence of violence against women and children in all of our communities is epidemic and systemic.

"The current disparity in the rights between victims of offenders, as well as judges appointed without mandatory performance evaluations to serve and be accountable to the community, has created a systemic endorsement of prejudice, bias, ignorance and the potential for abuse of power.

"The lack of accountability and discretionary power of judges is unjust.

"Parole boards who do not hear from the victims of crime about the effects and consequences of the crime(s)

committed against them are unable to make informed decisions regarding the release of inmates.

"Prior to the release of any inmate into society, all sides must be heard. The safety and personal rights in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms must be upheld for the victims whose rights and freedoms have already been violated by the inmate.

"Without this process justice will not prevail.

"Bill 130 is a serious attempt to create what has been missing for too long, mandatory performance evaluations for judges and the right for victims to actively participate, without the presence of the inmate or the inmate's representative, in parole board hearings.

"We endorse Bill 130."

That's signed by Laurel Hansen, the public education coordinator for the Oshawa Durham Rape Crisis Centre.

The bill is actually designed to do two things. I'll deal with the second aspect first. It allows victims, as laid out by the government of Canada, the ability to make parole board hearings, with the convicted individual and their legal representatives removed from the room. Also, it gives a 45-day notice period so that victims have the opportunity to prepare and be ready for their presentation to parole. That is the second aspect of the bill.

The first aspect is that judges are subject to a performance evaluation every three years. The Chief Justice of Ontario is the individual who establishes the performance evaluation, so it is removed from the political realm in that aspect, and then it is approved by the Judicial Council. I must stress that in no way does this bill allow the Legislature or politicians to question the decision of any judge. What it does is evaluate their ability to make those decisions.

One area of concern that I'll bring out now is subsection 3(4) under "Scope of evaluation." "In a judge's performance evaluation, a decision made in a particular case may be considered." It doesn't say "shall" or "will"; it says "may be considered." The concern is that if one case is part of a performance evaluation, then the decision on that case made by the judge could be considered by politicians to be influencing how a decision is made.

The reality is that in a performance evaluation of the last three years — and as has been mentioned to me, there are some cases that actually last three years — if a judge only handles one case in three years, I believe that case should be a part of the performance evaluation; also the fact that if a judge actually does one case that lasts an entire year or a three-year period and takes up one third of the judge's time, then quite possibly that one third of the time should be looked at as part of the performance evaluation.

As I said, it is the Chief Justice who establishes the performance evaluation; it is reviewed and approved by the Judicial Council; and it specifically states "in a

particular case may" — not "will" or "shall" — "be considered."

Therefore what I'm hoping to see or hear, and possibly we'll hear from others on this, is that a judge's performance is based on their actual ability to make decisions. Through the committee process, should the decision be made that this aspect appears to take too much control of the judicial system, I would be more than happy to review that, so long as we get the opportunity to hear input from different groups.

As I said, every three years all the judges in the province have a performance evaluation done on them. What takes place then is that the performance evaluations are referred to a committee of the Legislature. The reason that takes place is because the current system is completely internal. We have no idea of all the details of what takes place with any consideration of evaluations being done as a result of public complaints. The current process only allows for a review of a judge through a public complaint. It's all kept internal and we have no idea of the results, of punishment or of any action that's taken place.

In order to remove it from the secrecy of the judicial system, to make sure that there is proper performance evaluation and that judges are reviewed in a manner that is acceptable to the public of Ontario, we move it into a standing committee of the Legislature for review at that time. At that time the committee reviews those evaluations, and this allows as well the opportunity for judges to be praised for their good work. As I'm sure will come out later on, there are a large number of judges out there who do their job with exemplary performance. Those can be subjected to responses and the public can know exactly where their positions are and how they're doing.

Then those judges who do not meet the standard of performance evaluation as established by the Chief Justice are referred by the committee. For those the committee feels should be removed from the bench, it is recommended to the Attorney General at that time that this individual be removed from the bench, thereby giving the province the ability to remove those judges who are not performing in the manner they should be.

1010

We've been receiving faxes and letters from a large number of organizations. Here's another one:

"On behalf of the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, please accept this letter of support for your private member's bill entitled Courts of Justice and Ministry of Correctional Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 1997."

That is, as I said, from the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, signed by Steve Sullivan, the executive director.

Here's another one:

"Over the years, we too have become increasingly frustrated with the lack of judicial accountability within our criminal justice system, and it is a notion that is echoed by many crime victims in the province of Ontario. This lack of accountability serves nothing more than to magnify the public's already dwindling faith in the justice system. Establishing a performance evaluation for provincial judges would not only ensure that the integrity of the

law is upheld, we feel it is a vital step towards restoring the public's faith in the justice system."

That was sent to me and signed by Gemma Harmison, research director from the Victims of Violence Canadian Centre for Missing Children out of Ottawa.

Now, it did state in there that there was a lack of faith in the judicial system. The Canadian Bar Association's Systems of Civil Justice Task Force Report of 1996 states that the actual public confidence and trust in the judicial system is only 16.7%. That is not only by the public; that's by lawyers as well.

As well, I'm very happy to see the former chief of police from Thunder Bay here today to support the legislation, as well as the former deputy chief for the region of Durham, because I feel, as I've taken input from them, that their input was very significant.

I see that time is winding down. I have another letter here:

"I am in full support of any initiative intended to address inadequacies and flaws in our justice system and due process. Obviously, this includes the need to ensure accountability of everyone entrusted with responsibilities for the administration of justice."

It goes on to say that this bill actually does not go far enough. What they are asking for is to include justices of the peace. That is signed by Julian Fantino, the chief of police of the London police services.

As well, I think there's been a lot of support — over 95% of the complaints that come forward are dismissed at the subcommittee level.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The time has expired. Further debate?

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): Let me begin by commending the member for Oshawa for the good intentions behind this private member's bill. I think we all agree that the issue of violence against women and children is a very serious one in our society. In fact, numerous studies have indicated that the system does not always work well for victims.

There was some attempt to make some changes in that regard. You may remember that early on in the session I introduced a private member's bill on victims' rights legislation. The government subsequently introduced its own. I find it curious to look at this particular piece of legislation in light of that piece of legislation. That particular piece of legislation gives no particular rights to victims of crime. It's a permissive bill. It has no positive obligation to inform anybody of anything. If the particular individuals in the justice system want to, they certainly can, but there's no onus on the judicial system and on the legal system to inform victims of crime.

I want to deal with the two issues separately, and unfortunately, for my liking, they would be better off as two separate pieces of legislation.

Dealing with the latter first, there has certainly been a great deal of discussion as to how much victims ought to be involved. I for one am very much in favour of having victims totally involved in the system because they, after all, have paid the highest price when a criminal inflicts the kind of hardship that they do on ordinary citizens. The difficulty, however, with this particular piece, this section of the bill, is that it doesn't truly attempt to

understand what the current practice is. I think if a bill is going to be introduced, some attention has to be paid to that.

First, at the moment what happens with respect to parole board hearings is that two days' notice is given. We can agree that's simply not satisfactory. Two days' notice with no public announcement, which is the current practice, is certainly not enough. It's certainly not sufficient for victims first to be informed and then to respond.

I suppose one way victims could keep track, although it's their obligation to keep track, is that we know that under the system one third of a sentence has to elapse before a parole hearing will be scheduled. But that too is not sufficient, because it means the victim has to stay abreast of a particular criminal and what sentence that individual has served.

The difficulty is that at the moment the parole board takes a fair bit of time to collect the information that's required for a hearing. We're told that even one month before, they are still collecting information that will be presented to the parole board.

There are two competing interests here and a balance needs to be found. I would agree with the member for Oshawa that the balance has to be found in favour of the victim. Clearly there has to be notice given to victims in order to be able to present their case; 45 days may be too long, but two days is certainly not enough. So I applaud the spirit of this particular section of the bill and I urge the member to perhaps consider something that is more reasonable. In many pieces of legislation, 14 days is the time period that is given to inform. That may be a time limit you might want to look at as sufficient time to actually mail out a notice and receive a response from a victim. I agree with you in principle that two days' notice without any positive requirement to inform the victim is simply not enough.

The other issue is more difficult because it involves a long-standing parliamentary tradition and it involves our history as a constitutional entity. We have to remember that the independence of the judiciary is critical to the functioning of a democratic society. It is so fundamental that when the Stuart kings in England back in the early 18th century and the 17th century tried to remove judges because they ruled against them, there was a revolt. You may remember that when Mary and William ascended to the throne of England, one of the conditions was the Act of Settlement of 1701 that said they could not do just that, that the judiciary was independent and the monarch had no power to control the judiciary and to fire them under normal circumstances.

Our constitutional provisions in section 99 of the British North America Act closely parallel the Act of Settlement of 1701. So we have a tradition that dates back 300 years precisely because of the abuse of power of the majority: in that case the King; in future generations a majority of Parliament.

I want to just focus a little bit on section 99, because it is an important section. It states: "Subject to subsection (2) of this section, the judges of the superior courts shall hold office during good behaviour, but shall be remov-

able by the Governor General on address of the Senate and House of Commons."

That provision exists in order to be able to remove judges in extreme circumstances, and I would point out to the assembly that in all of the time since section 99 was enacted, the procedure to remove judges has been instituted twice by the federal Parliament and never, ever brought to a conclusion, and never has it occurred at the provincial level.

What you are asking to do by way of this bill, however well-intentioned, is to allow a majority to thwart the independence of the judiciary, and I would argue to the member for Oshawa that the last thing we need in the judicial system is the interference of political power.

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We can talk about performance evaluations; we can talk about how important it is to have a judiciary that functions well; we can talk about the importance of having the kind of training for judges that makes them aware of what happens on the streets of our cities and our towns; we can certainly talk about making them more sensitive, more compassionate, more understanding of the realities and the diversities that come before them. That's a far cry, however, from insisting that any Legislature, any government, any majority would have a final say as to whether a particular judge could be removed or not. That is an abuse of power. It is no different than the situation in which the Act of Settlement was first instituted in 1701.

Lest you think it could not happen, I would certainly point out to the assembly that we've had numerous instances in this House where legislation has been put through, the will of the majority of this assembly has been upheld contrary to the wishes of the populace. I need mention only the megacity legislation which, frankly, was against the wishes of the people upon whom this particular legislation will be exercised.

You will remember that 76% of the people who voted in the referendum with respect to that particular piece of legislation voted against the bill, yet the majority of this House, despite the wishes of the people, chose to enforce that legislation. It is not farfetched to believe that the same kind of extraordinary power could be wielded against the judiciary, which is for the citizen the last appeal.

That's what we really have to remember, that in our haste to ensure that we root out abuses, that we root out the incompetent, that we root out what appears to us to be deficient in the system, we do not take away the rights of citizens to appeal to an independent judiciary against the excesses of government and against whatever situations may be in society at that particular moment.

I would like to say to the member for Oshawa that truly his heart is in the right place. This particular provision, however, is not in keeping with how we expect a democracy to function. I'm sure that's not his intent. I can't believe that would be his intent. I think it's simply a question of being so keenly interested in this issue that some of the history of the independence of the judiciary has been lost.

In extraordinary circumstances there is now a possibility to remove the judiciary. At the federal level, as I've

indicated, it requires an address of both the Senate and the House of Commons, and that still exists. I've indicated that with respect to the provinces no such obligation exists, but it could be argued that this precedent existing at the federal level could be imported at the provincial level.

What that provision does is imposes a very high standard on legislatures to ensure that judges are not removed arbitrarily from their position. When you subject the judiciary to a legislative committee, you really are playing with our democratic system and what you are doing is exercising your right as a majority to undermine a fundamental aspect of what makes our system work, and work very well.

With that, I want to say to the honourable member that in general I agree with the spirit behind the legislation but I cannot in conscience support the parts of the legislation that would seek to undermine the independence of the judiciary. I worry that the kinds of decisions that judges would have to make would not be as impartial and as fair as we would like them to be, that judges would be forever looking over their shoulders thinking about what their political masters — because that's what we would become — would think. That's not the kind of system that I think would benefit any of us.

With respect to the second element of the bill, it's certainly very good. I wish it had been imported in very strong terms in the victims' rights legislation. I would urge the member opposite to speak to the Attorney General and bring forth an amendment which would make it a positive requirement to involve the victims at all stages of the process and not simply as convenient within the process. I would also urge him, particularly with the parole provisions, to think about the time limit he has imposed. Maybe a shorter time period would still be effective to protect the rights of the victims and not hamper the process as it tries to prepare for parole hearings.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): It's with pleasure that I have the opportunity this morning to speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party on Bill 130, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act and the Ministry of Correctional Services Act. I have to say part of the problem is that there are two separate issues we're being asked to deal with this morning in passing this legislation: one dealing with judges and the other with giving notification to victims of crime of when the perpetrator of that crime comes up for a hearing before the parole board.

If those issues were dealt with separately, I would have no difficulty in saying that our caucus would have no problem in supporting the second issue, the amendments to the Ministry of Correctional Services Act. I'll speak to that first and then I'll speak to the judges act, because I had an opportunity yesterday to speak to the member who put forward this act and have done quite a bit of reading and thinking about what you're asking us to do in the first part.

Very succinctly and very quickly put, in the second part of the act the member is asking that if a person goes to jail because he or she has been responsible for a crime against a person, whenever that inmate comes up for

parole, the victim of the crime be notified within, I think it's 30 or 45 days — I would argue 45 days is maybe a little bit too long — to know when that parole hearing is going to happen and have the ability to appear before the parole board. On that, no problem. I think it's high time, I think it's a step in the right direction and I'd have no problem supporting that particular part of the bill.

However, it's unfortunate that you've put this together with what you're asking us to do in the first part of the bill. What the member is asking is that judges could be fired by the members of this Legislative Assembly. There is a very long tradition, for good reason, within our British parliamentary system, and that is that the judiciary is separate from the Legislature. It is like that for a very good reason. We do not want politicians, we do not want the political process — I see the judge from Ottawa hiding when I say that; well, grimacing then. But it is very true that we do not want to have politicians or the political process being mixed up in when a judge has to be removed from the bench, because quite frankly the judiciary has to have the independence it has for it to do its job and not worry, not for a judge to be on the bench every second minute worrying, "Am I going to get fired?"

Let's talk about how you become a judge and where we find ourselves now, because I think the actions of this government might be why this bill has come forward. Ian Scott, one of the former attorney generals of this province, in the David Peterson government, took great steps in order to start de-politicizing the appointment of judges. I think it's been fairly well recognized that the work Mr Scott did moved the province of Ontario quite a way in taking away that political interference when judges were appointed.

Succinctly put, in the past, the way you got appointed to a judgeship is just how it happens in the federal government: If you know Jean Chrétien, you're a judge, period. It's not who's most qualified. It's not who's the best judge. It's not the person who would be best qualified to do the job. If in the federal case I've got a Liberal Party card in my pocket and I know the Prime Minister and I've been at the proper number of fundraisers, I get appointed to the bench as a judge. There are all kinds of examples of what's happened federally. Provincially that used to be the case. Thank God that Ian Scott, under a former government, said, "We need to put an end to that."

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Now, we shouldn't say that just because the person who wants to be judge is a member of the governing party, he or she should not become a judge; of course not. But that should not be the sole determining factor. What Mr Scott did was to say, "All right, we're going to have an interview process that's set in place where an independent body will interview those applicants who become judges and they will make a recommendation to the Attorney General about who will be appointed as a judge." The Attorney General, in effect, got a short list and then chose from that short list who was going to be the judge. That really cleaned things up quite a bit. It didn't clean it up as much as we'd like, but it was a good step forward.

That process was then improved upon by a former Attorney General, Howard Hampton, and by the last Attorney General, Marion Boyd, when that whole interview process was not only strengthened but also expanded to cover justices of the peace. That was one of the areas Mr Scott had not touched when he had talked about this interview process.

What has happened is that a lot of the appointments that are being made to the bench — I wouldn't say all — on the part of this government tend to be political.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): No.

Mr Bisson: The member says no, but I've watched with a certain amount of interest some of the appointments of judges that have made it to the bench, and what ends up happening in a lot of cases is that a number of those judges have fairly strong attachments to the Tory caucus. In fairness to the members across the way, I'm not saying that every appointment has been that way, but it has certainly been a lot more political than I would like to see it, and that brings me to this point.

Judges have to be independent. Once they are appointed by the Attorney General to sit on the bench, they then need to be independent from the political process. We do not want to be in a situation where a judge is making a decision on whatever case or whatever individual is before the judge and has to worry: "Boy, am I going to be offending somebody? Will the Chief Judge refer me for an evaluation to a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly?"

We don't want to be walking down that particular path because, for very good reason, for many years we have separated the role of the state, the role of the executive powers, the legislative powers, from that of the judiciary; they've been made independent. In the United States they have a system where there is quite a bit of interchange between the judiciary and the executive powers. I don't think we'd want to be going in that particular direction.

The other point is that in reading the bill, one of the parts — I hope the member across the way can respond to is this, because if I'm reading this correctly, this would be extremely problematic. Subsection (6) of the bill reads, "Beginning in January and every third year after 1997, the standing committee" — that's a standing committee of the Legislature, for those people watching — "shall review the performance evaluations that it has received" — that's from the Chief Judge — "and shall recommend to the Attorney General that a judge should be removed from office if it is of the opinion, based on the judge's evaluation...."

Two points: In the opinion of who? If you read that legislation, it almost sounds like the members of the standing committee would have to accept the recommendations on the judge. That's what I'm reading. If that's what's happening, that's not at all what you want to do with the bill.

The second point is, "Beginning in January and every third year after 1997...." Does that mean that if a judge is sent before the evaluation committee in 1998 or 1999, he or she would have to wait till the year 2000? I'm not quite sure, the way the language is written, that would even work.

I would just end on that point to say I will be voting against this bill on the basis of what's in the first part of the act. I don't think we need to be mixing the political process with judges. On the second part, I wish I could vote for it, but it's a package. There's no way of splitting it.

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): I'm pleased to speak on my colleague's private member's bill in the Legislature today. I commend his concern for victims of crime. This bill sets up a mechanism to notify crime victims if the offender who victimized them is scheduled for a parole hearing. This government has shown a strong commitment to victims' rights. The Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services supports providing victims with notification of parole hearings and enabling them to make submissions to the parole board.

The Board of Parole currently provides victims who request information with advance notice of hearing dates. This advance notice is given as soon as an offender's scheduled date for a hearing is determined. Victims who register with the victims' support line will also be notified of parole hearings through the automated notification service.

The Board of Parole policy already enables victims to make a submission to the board in advance of the parole hearing and to obtain information about the offender's parole decision. The Board of Parole accepts written submissions such as victim impact statements in their current policy. This allows the victims to submit their arguments without having to attend the hearing, where they would have to see the offender and go to a correctional facility, as this is where the parole hearings are held. Presently, the rooms where parole hearings are held are small. To have the victims attend the hearings would present concerns with both security and space.

In principle, the ministry supports this legislation and fully agrees with my colleague's cause of furthering victims' rights. The ministry also acknowledges some limitations to the bill as it currently stands. For example, it may not always be possible to give the victims advance notice of 45 days.

This government has made several highly effective changes to the parole board and its policies. Thanks to a variety of measures, the Ontario parole system is experiencing the lowest rate of granted parole releases in 10 years. This involves changes in policy and it involves appointing people to the parole board who have a strong commitment to law and order, people who aren't going to endanger public safety by granting parole to people who do not meet stringent guidelines. We have re-balanced the parole system to ensure that in all cases victims' rights come before offenders' rights.

Parole is a privilege, and this government has worked to ensure that it is treated as a privilege. Parole is no longer the inherent right of any prisoner who serves the allotted fraction of their sentence. It is a privilege that must be earned and that is not handed out lightly. The ministry has undertaken some important steps in making the parole system tougher and more demanding. It has pushed for more attention to victims' rights.

In conclusion, while the ministry strongly supports the intent of this bill, the parole board has policy to address

the concerns of victims' notification and of victims' rights to make submissions at parole hearings. The ministry cannot support the bill's passage without amendments. It is the ministry's conviction that the issues raised are better dealt with on a policy level than on a legislative level.

I invite my colleague to meet with me to discuss changes to parole policy and I congratulate him for his concern for victims.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): It's an interesting bill that mates an amendment to the Ministry of Correctional Services Act with one to the Courts of Justice Act.

I'll concur with Mr Bisson in saying that there's no quarrel whatsoever with the proposition of advising victims of a pending parole release and an opportunity for victims to respond to the decision or direction being taken by the parole board. At the same time, I have great concern about whether this government indeed has given effect to protection of victims or consideration of victims' rights.

The Victims' Bill of Rights, much touted, seems to have fallen into the wastecan of legislative efforts. Most recently, this government should be aware of the case of Linda Evans, for instance, in Welland, for whom the Victims' Bill of Rights meant diddly-squat to this government. A plea bargain was struck in contravention of the spirit of the Victims' Bill of Rights, and she has a strong sense that this government has little regard for victims.

In a case just prior to that, one which we raised here in the Legislature, and it was raised by the member for St Catharines as well, there was again another plea bargain — in this case it dealt with a young offender, and so be it — where victims' rights were totally disregarded, notwithstanding that the matter happened to be brought to the attention of the Attorney General.

This government wants to talk a big game about victims and certainly hopes to exploit an undercurrent running through all of our communities, one of fear of crime and fear of victimization. At the same time, it underresources police forces, it underresources crown attorneys' offices; it is a party to the destruction, the demolition of the legal aid plan. It's our view that the role of defence counsel is as important to the maintenance of justice and the acquisition of justice, for victims as well as those accused, as effective, trained and resourced crown attorneys.

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So I'm not going to take the hook here. This government has failed victims. It has failed victims of crime by virtue of its abandonment of police forces, its abandonment of courts, its abandonment of crown attorneys and its abandonment of adequate funding for a legal aid plan, which is essential if justice is going to be done.

I'm going to move to the former part of the bill. This is oh so strange coming from a government which, as you have already heard, again from my colleague Mr Bisson, has circumvented the arm's-length screening and appointment recommendations process that was established — and we acknowledge — by one of our finest attorneys general, Ian Scott, and maintained and built upon by Howard Hampton and Marion Boyd respectively.

This government again talks a big game about eliminating red tape and bureaucracy. Horsefeathers — all meaningless, hollow words. This government very much wants to politicize the judiciary. I have far too much regard for the quality of the judiciary in this province. We are the envy of the largest part of the world in terms of the quality of our bench here in Ontario. That quality, I believe very strongly, as I believe most Ontarians do, was enhanced by the appointments process as it was revised through the period of 1985 to 1995.

For this member to suggest that a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly — and we know what that means: a committee that's dominated by the government. That means that for the next year and a half or so it will be this government; after 1998, 1999, it will be by another government. For a majority of those members to review the so-called performance of a judge I believe is absurd and seriously undermines the long tradition of independence of the judiciary, an independence that is crucial, essential if we're going to maintain a justice system that reflects the values of a democratic society and reflects the interest in obtaining justice, as much as justice can be obtained in any given system run by human beings.

I'm concerned that there's a code language here, because it speaks of the "review of performance" of a particular judge. I'm not certain there isn't a desire here to turn judges into mere mechanics in a sausage factory so that they pump out justice, as it would seem, at an increasingly higher rate, to the detriment of the quality of decision-making that's taking place.

We have in place a system which has worked well for the removal of judges who have not met the standards we expect of members of the bench. I'm not going to endorse a concept of performance evaluation overseen by political taskmasters which expresses disdain for the quality of the bench — a disdain I'm not about to share because I have too much regard for the bench in this province — and which attempts to politicize by creating political supervision of the performance of judges. That type of interference is repugnant to our long-held judicial traditions and our traditions of meting out criminal justice. It contradicts long-held values which, I tell you once again, are the envy of most, if not all, of the balance of the world.

Notwithstanding our endorsement of the amendments to the Ministry of Correctional Services Act contained in this bill, the presence of the amendment to the Courts of Justice Act and the attack on provincial judges makes it impossible for me to support this bill.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): I too would like to commend my friend the member for Oshawa for his initiative. My time today will be devoted to the issue of judicial accountability, and I'm prepared to admit that there are some aspects of part I of the bill that will require some fine-tuning when referred to committee. But the issue of judicial accountability being reviewed at this point in time is both fitting and appropriate. I believe a number of reasons will be advanced by the departmental people with regard to the first section of this bill, and not to support it. I have but one reason to suggest that the time has arrived for the accountability of the judiciary to

be reviewed, and that is that it is a fitting and proper thing at this point in time.

I welcome the opportunity to speak on this issue because of the many misconceptions that exist with regard to the nature of work and the hours of work and indeed the working conditions of the judiciary of this province. There are many misconceptions about the quality of service provided by the vast majority of the men and women who labour in those positions.

In 1978, when I was appointed, there were very few rules of procedure which existed with regard to judicial complaints. A person could complain anywhere in the system, and upon that complaint, the Judicial Council would either dismiss the matter summarily or might consider the same and reject the issue or consider certain evidence and then make a decision as to proceed or reject. But it was at that time, then and only then, that the Judicial Council would bother to inform the judge about whom the complaint had been received. It was then and only then that the judge would have an opportunity to defend himself or herself.

There were no rules of natural justice in this system, rules which the judge was obligated to observe and extend in court to any person charged with murder, rape, manslaughter. These were not extended to the members of the judiciary. Those changes which have taken place in the last number of years were brought about by the diligent work of the provincial judges' association, and they now apply to all judicial complaints.

In the very near future, in the next 30 days, a book authored by a local Toronto-based law professor will be launched on the trials and tribulations of the Honourable Leo Landreville. In the 1960s he became the first justice forced to resign from the then Ontario Supreme Court. This book will cause some embarrassment to those who favour decisions being taken behind closed doors. I believe it will cast some serious doubt on the fairness of judicial hearings of that period.

The late Leo Landreville was a native of Ottawa who practised law in northern Ontario, became mayor of his city and was later appointed to the bench. I came to know Leo when he joined the firm with which I was articled. Partners of that firm are both members of the Ontario Court of Justice at this time. They virtually took him in and provided employment after he had depleted his life's savings attempting to clear his good name. I had occasion to hear from the horse's mouth his side of the story and read the Judicial Council's side of the story. I'm not so naïve as to think that I heard it all. You practise matrimonial law long enough, you know there are always at least three sides to the story: his, hers and the truth. But I look forward to that book, though it might be 30 years too late, and I commend it to each and every member of this Legislature.

I suggest to this Legislature that over the past 30 years not very much has changed. We have to ask ourselves, if the accused in the Airbus scandal had not had the resources to mount a defence, and indeed an offence, would that person have cleared his name? Had it been an indigent person on a legal aid certificate, would the results have been the same? Everybody is watching the evidence coming forward in the Morin commission at this

time. Are we all completely satisfied with the Somalia inquiry? These were public matters.

I could stand here for a lengthy period of time and defend the work that my former colleagues do on a daily basis. I don't have that time. I wish in another debate I would be afforded that opportunity. I can tell you that the respect and admiration that I hold for my former colleagues is tantamount to the most I could hold for any group of individuals in this province. I think the 98% or 99% of the judges in this province who perform their duties in a professional and responsible manner will have no concerns with regard to judicial accountability or about the lifting of the judicial veil of secrecy.

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There are problems, as with any other organization, in that 1% or 2%, but those are not the people who are going to be identified; those are not the people who are going to be reported; those are not the people the Judicial Council is going to deal with.

I would simply say, in the few seconds allotted to me, that what we're doing here with regard to judicial accountability is taking the efforts of a former Attorney General, Mr Scott, who was lauded here earlier, who made it possible, allowed the Chief Justice of the Provincial Court to take this action. No Chief Justice has taken it in that period of time. What this bill is saying is, require it to be mandatory. These are the 1990s. Everyone else, particularly the people in this Legislature, are challenged to be responsible every four or five years. What is so different about people doing the job that the people who labour in the judiciary do?

I concur that there are changes that must be made at the committee level, but I commend my friend from Oshawa for bringing this matter forward. It is altogether timely and appropriate, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak on it.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The bill allows for some interesting problems to be dealt with, and I will be supporting the bill on that basis. But I should point out that if you're going to do these things, you have to actually fund them, and they have to operate. You can't just have the press conference and the noise that goes with it.

In St Catharines, for instance, Bill Taylor, whose daughter had been murdered, contacted my office recently. His wife was at the hairdresser's and someone there told her that Elio Caputo, who was alleged to have murdered their daughter, Cara, was back in St Catharines in the detention centre and was going to be in court soon.

Obviously this constituent was very upset because the family had been told they would be notified if a situation like this arose. The Victims' Bill of Rights is supposed to guarantee they will be notified. Mrs Taylor wanted us to know that there was no cooperation, in her view, from the police and she was unable to speak with a detective she wanted to speak with until the Tuesday after. She contacted Mike Harris's office and was told, "It's not Mr Harris's job."

What I'm pointing out is that when you pass this kind of legislation, you have to ensure that you're going to have the financial resources to back it up and that these matters are going to be dealt with appropriately.

In terms of the review of judges by a legislative committee, I'm wary of politicians second-guessing judges, but I've disagreed with many judges' decisions over the years and I think the Judicial Council should look into that.

In terms of the victims being allowed to have a say in whether someone comes out on parole, I think it is very important that that be the case. I just regret I don't have more time to express it.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): In the four and three quarter minutes that I have to speak to the bill, I would like to make a couple of points. First of all, I compliment my colleague from Durham region, the member for Oshawa, on bringing Bill 130 forward, which addresses a concern which many of us on this side of the House share with respect to the necessity of all persons in authority in the province of Ontario being accountable, including all of us as legislators and members of the judiciary.

There's no question that we on this side of the House are concerned about the importance of fighting crime. Indeed, the member for London South and the member for Scarborough West and I, in our capacities as parliamentary assistants, are addressing some of those issues now and will be making certain recommendations with respect to crime control in the province. So it is a well-directed bill.

There is a system in place in Ontario with respect to complaints concerning judges. That system involves complaining to the Ontario Judicial Council. There is an annual report which the Ontario Judicial Council is obliged to file, which has been filed with this Legislature, in this House, which sets out all the complaints made with respect to judges in the province over the past year and how they were dealt with. I say this with respect to the comment by the member for Ottawa-Rideau concerning judicial secrecy: This is a public report. It is tabled in the Legislature. It is the obligation of the Judicial Council to do so and it is done each year. It is there for everyone and anyone in the province to read and review, particularly with respect to the complaints procedure and the results of particular complaints. So that procedure is there.

There is also an education procedure for judges which is supervised by the Chief Judge. He has an education secretariat — that is, the Chief Judge of the Ontario Court of Justice (Provincial Division) — and that is followed, particularly with respect to new judges, and then continuing education for judges as they continue their careers on the bench. So those systems are in place.

Now what happens if there is misconduct by a judge of such a degree that the judge should be removed from office? The Courts of Justice Act provides that the Judicial Council may make a recommendation to the Attorney General for the removal of a judge from the bench. That's the law in Ontario. The Attorney General brings that recommendation here to the Legislature and tables it, and then it is the power of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, on the address of this assembly, to remove that judge from the bench. So we have a system in the province now for the removal of judges, should it be necessary for a judge to be removed from the bench.

The difficulty with the bill — and here's the major problem — is that it interferes with the independence of the judiciary. It's fundamental in Canadian constitutional law, in British tradition, in the Charter of Rights, all three sources, that we as legislators do not interfere with the independence of the judiciary. That is not an abstract legal concept. It's important that our constituents have the right to know, when they go into a courtroom, whether they're in a civil dispute or they're charged with a crime, that the person who is going to acquit them or convict them, or the person who is going to charge the jury in a jury case, is an independent person, that the person is not beholden to the politicians of the day, to us or whomever may have been the government five years ago and appointed that person, or in the future. That is an absolute entitlement that every Canadian, every citizen of Ontario, has; that is, that the person before whom they appear in court is independent and is not reporting to politicians concerning their conduct.

That's the difficulty with the bill. The Attorney General is strongly opposed. As his parliamentary assistant, I am strongly opposed to Bill 130 with respect to the proposed amendments to the Courts of Justice Act.

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I would like to rise very briefly to strongly endorse this bill. Virtually everyone in this province is regularly accountable for their job performance and I think it's a great step forward that this should be applied to the judiciary. It will help the good judges, and the small number who are not good will be able to get help.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Oshawa, you have two minutes.

Mr Ouellette: There are a number of points I need to bring forward, but due to the limited time that I have I will just deal with the ones I am able to.

First of all, 95% of all the reviews that come are dismissed at the subcommittee level for the current evaluations that are done. There are a number of jurisdictions, including Germany, France, a large number of states, Manitoba and Nova Scotia which are currently considering this legislation.

This legislation in no way has any jurisdiction over federal judges, nor does it give it the Legislative Assembly, politicians, the ability to overturn any judge's decisions. What it does, as I said before, is allow us to review their ability to make those decisions.

The bill allows for the recognition of problem areas within the judiciary, so if there's a common problem, special training can be brought out. First of all, the Chief Justice of the province of Ontario is the individual who establishes the review program. The Judicial Council approves the program. Why not allow it to go forward if there are problems with it and, at the committee stage, amend anything that needs to be done?

What the third party is asking for is to allow bad judges out there and poor performance to continue in Ontario. The province is the one which currently appoints the judges, the province is the one which makes the laws, yet no one has the ability to question those individuals once they're in that position. What I'm asking for is the support of the Legislature to allow this to go through. If there are difficulties with it, I have no problem at the

committee level to account for those difficulties. We can do it.

What some of the members opposite were asking for is the status quo. That's unacceptable.

The Deputy Speaker: The time allotted for the first ballot item has expired.

1100

EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS AND
FREEDOMS ACT, 1997
LOI DE 1997 SUR LES DROITS ET
LIBERTÉS DES EMPLOYÉS

Mr Sheehan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to provide rights and freedoms to employees with respect to membership in trade unions or employees associations and representation by them / *Projet de loi 131, Loi prévoyant des droits et des libertés pour les employés en ce qui concerne l'adhésion à un syndicat ou à une association d'employés et leur représentation par ceux-ci.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): As the title implies, this act will define freedoms or rights for workers by enacting what are known in other jurisdictions as right-to-work provisions: the freedom for the worker to decide if they want to join or remain a member of a union or employees association; the right to work without the condition of being compelled to become a member of a union or an employees association; the prohibition of unions or employees associations from collecting dues either directly or indirectly from non-members; and finally the protection from coercion by the employer or the union to join or not join a union or employees association.

Succinctly, Bill 131 would entrench in law the fundamental right of workers to decide whether or not they want to be represented in the workplace without coercion from either the employer or the union. The bill would apply to new and renegotiated collective agreements.

The realities of the changing economy in the modern workplace demand we re-examine how Ontario's labour relations are structured. More and more, we see that individuals and not the state are taking ownership of their rights and their future. Currently, in a union shop, employment is contingent upon union membership. Because of the Rand formula, Canadian workers are privately taxed by trade unions to the tune of \$1.1 billion per year.

The closed shop forces workers to belong to a union. It started in Britain in 1906 with the Trade Union Act, where it was implemented in exchange for the surrender of the right to strike. The concept was duplicated in the United States under the Wagner Act in 1935 and in Canada in 1948 in the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act. Since then, all have enacted laws protecting the employee's right to work.

Bill 131 is an attempt to bring Ontario's labour relations into the modern world, to put Ontario on a par with some of the more successful jurisdictions. Canada

and Australia are the only two major economies that no longer protect the citizen's right to work. Bill 131 recognizes the right of the individual workers to decide what is best for them and their families.

Section 2(d) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms allows for freedom of association. It implies and includes freedom from coercion to join an association the citizen does not want to join, nor the obligation to pay dues the citizen does not want to pay.

It is a fundamental concept that an individual has the right to negotiate for his services and has the right to be employed by anyone who offers him employment. Opponents of right-to-work laws often cite the Merv Levigne Supreme Court decision which compared the compulsion in the closed-shop arrangement to the compulsion to pay taxes set by a democratically elected government.

I point out that the decision was predicated on an assumption that workers are better off because of the compulsion to join or pay union dues. Current evidence from New Zealand refutes that assumption. The process began initially with the Labour government's decision in 1986 to re-regulate labour, which predictably squeezed profits and increased unemployment.

The National Party campaigned on and implemented the Employment Contracts Act in 1991. This allowed contracting parties to choose the type of employment contract. Membership in unions was made voluntary, closed shops prohibited. Workers are free to contract their labour subject to a few limiting constraints such as minimum wage. Only after the end of the contract period are strikes and lockouts permitted.

Leading figures, business and labour, predicted the following: falling wages; new low-quality jobs, mostly part-time to suit employers; anarchy; strikes and confrontation; gangster unionism would spread; rising unemployment among women and young people; suppression of workplace democracy; and, widespread abuse by employers. The Council of Trade Unions up a "sweatline" for aggrieved workers.

What happened? The "sweatline" soon lapsed for lack of interest. Average real wages have risen, wage structures now reflect reward for increased skill acquisition. Strikes have dropped to near zero and new contracts are settled with little fuss.

Employment is up 20%, or 250,000 jobs, or 4.5% per year, and forecasts indicate this will continue. Unemployment fell from 11% in 1991 to under 6% in 1996, compared to Australia, where that is not the case. Seventy-five per cent of new jobs are full-time.

The greatest benefactors of change were the socially disadvantaged: the indigenous population like the Maoris, women and youth.

Climate in most workplaces improved. People felt a sense of empowerment.

Initial opinion surveys indicated a 2-to-1 opposition to the ECA. Now, 41% of every 1,000 New Zealanders surveyed approve or strongly approve of the right to work. Eighty-five per cent now feel high or very high job satisfaction. Seventy-five per cent of those surveyed want direct employment and wage negotiations with their employer. Workers now determine negotiation strategies, not union heads.

In the 1996 general election the opposition party campaigned to repeal the ECA. They lost the election; 60% of the electorate voted for parties that promised to retain the current system.

Who are the losers? Union membership is down 30%, union officials have lost some jobs and some unions have evolved into service organizations helping to sell services and improve members' competitiveness. Industrial relations departments at universities have disappeared. Funnily, union political contributions seemed to have declined.

A 1996 global competitive report rates New Zealand as the third most competitive economy out of the 44 countries surveyed; Canada ranked eighth. New Zealand also is ranked second on "willingness to accept change" criteria, such as labour force restructuring and ability to avoid social costs of employment.

Overall, labour productivity has risen 2% per annum from 1991 to 1996. Combined output of capital and labour rose by 2.3% versus 1.3% in previous upswings. New Zealanders have translated economic upswings in demand into more employment and modest wage increases.

Right-to-work laws have produced a palpable improvement in workers' satisfaction. New commitment to quality and productivity has replaced the notorious attitudes towards performance that were the result of distant and remote authorities' wage-fixing. Workers are now rewarded for effort, skill and attention to quality.

What's happening in Canada? The Canadian public agrees that compulsion to join a union is unacceptable. A recent national survey of 1,504 Canadians by the Angus Reid survey group found that 90% of respondents believe a worker shouldn't have to be a member of a union in order to be hired; 61% of respondents believe that both union membership and the payment of union dues should be voluntary; 80% of respondents who are currently union members believe that workers should not have to be union members to get a job.

1110

In summary, Bill 131 is about restoring the fundamental right of Ontario workers to exercise the Charter of Rights to freely associate, or disassociate, as the case may be. Times have changed since 1948. We have a better-educated and a more independent workforce. We have employment standards and labour relations legislation that now provide workers with protection from abuse that occurred in the past.

The New Zealand experience effectively refutes the court's presumption in the Lavigne decision: that the worker is better off as a member of a union. Obviously, the people of New Zealand are enjoying prosperity and benefits, especially those people critics claim should have been most severely affected because of social disadvantage. It's time for right-to-work legislation in Ontario. I urge you to support this bill.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): This is as dangerous and evil and mean-spirited and vicious an attack on working people, on their families, on their parents, who as seniors expect some decency in their retirement, as has ever been presented.

The people in Welland-Thorold, across Niagara and across this province don't need lessons in workers' rights from the likes of the sponsor of this bill. Too many people in my own community of Welland-Thorold, across the region and across this province worked too hard, struggled too long and paid too high a price to build some modest rights for workers in this province to have them attacked and abolished in a single stroke, in one bill, by a government that's only going to serve one term.

If you want to take a look at some of the history, read Reverend Fern Sayles's book, *Welland Workers Make History*, and learn about the struggle of working people, new Canadians, immigrants on those picket lines. Learn about the time they spent in jail or the times they were bloodied up by company goons as they struggled for the right to build trade unions, as they struggled for some decent wages and some decent pensions, as they struggled, with great sacrifice, their spouses and kids on those picket lines with them, to build a better Ontario — and by God, they did.

Let the sponsor of this bill take this message to the workers at Gallaher Thorold Paper Co, who have won their jobs back because it was the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union that was singularly responsible for negotiating with the purchaser of a company that Noranda had every intention of shutting down, and to hell with the workers whose livelihoods depended on that place.

Let the sponsor of this bill go to the workers at Stelpipe Page-Hersey, the Canadian Auto Workers members who have been on their line for seven months struggling for some equity, some parity in wages with other Stelco operations and some modest improvements to pension plans.

The trade union movement is the single most important institution in our country in terms of the development of workers' rights, protection for workers in the workplace; protecting workers against the savagery of unsafe workplaces and the injuries and deaths that flow from that; protecting workers against the mean-spiritedness and the greed of, as we increasingly witness, multinational corporations that want to pick workers' pockets to enhance profits at any cost and with no regard for the welfare of workers and their families and their communities.

Let the sponsor of this bill talk about right-to-work jurisdictions. We know what they are. We witnessed them in the southern United States, we witnessed them throughout Third World countries, where the wealthy become that much wealthier but where working people and working standards drop lower and lower.

"Right to work" means the right to work for youngsters so we can restore child labour; it means the right to work for lower and lower wages, so we have a low-wage economy.

Let the sponsor of this bill talk to small businesses about what it means when you gut workers' wages so workers don't have the resources, the income to spend and invest in local businesses.

I couldn't be more opposed to any piece of legislation than I am to this, and I'm confident that I speak for the vast majority of people, not just across Niagara but across this province. As for me, I tell you, I'm sticking with the

union. All of us owe too much to the struggle and the efforts of the trade union movement in this country. All of us owe far too much to abandon the trade union movement now.

As a New Democrat, I'm committed, as are other New Democrats, to building trade unionism so that more and more workers who now don't have the protection that a trade union provides in their workplace will acquire that protection; so that women workers perpetually exploited, all the more so under this government's regime, will obtain some modest protection; so that workers in unsafe workplaces will obtain some modest protection; so that seniors who expect to retire with dignity and decency can do so.

We'll be voting against this bill and arguing against it across this province. This is a government that betrays the legacy of Bill Davis and former Conservative governments. This is a Reform policy, and I say now to working people out there who may have felt somewhat attracted to some of the hot-button issues that Preston Manning has been raising across the province and the country, you're looking at the real agenda of Reform, and that's to gut workers' rights and to place workers at the bottom of the pile so they can be exploited unmercifully and so they can be used to make bigger and bigger profits to satisfy more and more greed from the corporate and banking world. We're going to be voting against this bill.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Just a few words about this bill. We were elected on a clear mandate to repeal Bill 40 and to restore balance and stability in labour relations, and Bill 7 fulfilled this. We were elected on the clear mandate to democratize the workplace by introducing secret ballot votes, and Bill 7 fulfilled this commitment. The results of decertification votes now more accurately reflect the individual wishes of employees.

Speaking of stability, over the last year and a half since the passage of Bill 7, investors and employers have consistently expressed a desire for stability in Ontario's workplaces. In 1996, under our labour legislation, Ontario saw one of the lowest total number of strikes in the last 10 years: 134. The year before that under this government there were 136. So that points to stability. Also, we're in a period of much shorter strikes. In the early 1990s strikes were of an average duration of 40, 43 and 42 days, and now after Bill 7 we're down to a shorter duration of 33 days. Even that is higher almost exclusively as a result of the OPSEU dispute.

Directly to the bill, I think the fundamental question is one of a union shop requiring that a member must become a member of the union if he's an employee at a unionized workplace. To me the underlying philosophy is based on the wishes of the majority. If the majority of the employees in the bargaining unit want to be represented by a trade union, then the bargaining rights apply to all employees in the union. If 55% or more of the people vote for a union, then the rest of that workplace — the majority rules — should be represented by that union. If the majority of people in that workplace don't want to be represented by the union, then we have decertification as a possibility for those people to pursue.

With regard to dues checkoff, the argument that employees do not vote for the union should nevertheless pay for representation by the exclusive bargaining agent, I'd agree with the Supreme Court of Canada, which ruled that "There is not distinction in principle between our overall system of government and the role of taxation within it in the mini-democracy of the workplace."

If 50% of the people vote for a governing party in Ontario, then they have the right to tax and spend tax money and pass laws, and the rest of the population, even those who didn't vote in favour of that government, still abides by those laws. I think it's a similar principle, in this case for both dues checkoff and union shop, that if the majority votes to be members of that union, the other 45% shouldn't say, "We're not going to abide by the rule of majority."

I won't be supporting this bill. Those are my thoughts on it.

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Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to hear the comments of the previous speaker across the floor. I do not support this bill in any way, shape or form. Its intent is clear. What you see with this proposed bill in front of us is simply a blatant attack on unions and trade movements across this province. It's an attack that started on June 8, 1995, and it's occurring every single day.

If one follows theoretically what this bill says, if you apply the same argument, then the people in this province who did not vote for the Progressive Conservative government, which is about 55% of the people of Ontario, should feel they're not bound by the laws, by the tax policies, by the policies of this government, because they were not part of that; they didn't support that. That is not how our system works.

I have never belonged to a union. In the situations where I've worked, it was not there. But there have been situations where family and friends of mine I know very well have been protected by unions, have gained tremendous rights by unions, and I have family and friends who have paid a dear price for working in places that were not protected by unions.

My father was injured in an industrial accident. He remained in a wheelchair for 23 years, until he died. The reason that occurred was because the owner of the place where he was working, a small, non-unionized company, did not spend \$2 to put a wooden barrier around an elevator shaft. He fell 40 feet down that elevator shaft.

That blatant health and safety violation could have been avoided, but you know what? The owner wasn't accountable to anybody. There was nobody putting the pressure on; there was nobody putting the heat on. There was nobody to make sure he followed the laws of the province. I venture to say that if my father had worked in a company that had a union and he had been protected by the rights and support of that union, that accident would not have occurred. There are many other cases.

Health and safety standards across this province have improved tremendously because of unions, wages for workers have become more fair because of unions, but you'd like to bring it back to the good old days, as you see it, of Reform mentality, where people who owned the

companies ran the show, where there was no balance, where health and safety was only an aside to doing business.

Your Bill 7 has done that to a great degree. You took labour legislation that had been put in place by previous NDP, Liberal, even Tory governments and you've gutted it. You've made it open season on union workers across this province. You've allowed scab labour in every part of our society. You have taken away the basic protection that working men and women had across this province, and this bill only does that further.

I don't understand why this government is so obsessed about taking rights away from working men and women across Ontario, people who simply want to go to work in the morning, earn a decent living and go home, back to their families, in one piece at the end of the day. Any of us would wish that. I don't think that's evil, I don't think that's wrong, I don't think that's bad, but you obviously seem to think so.

This legislation is another attack on those people across this province who work in conditions that are often difficult, who work often under some very dangerous situations and who have health and safety protection in place as a result of gains that have been made over the years. You want to take all that away.

By doing this, you are simply weakening the role of unions, and it's nothing else. Don't hide behind it. Come out and say that's your case. Don't play games with this. Don't word it as something balanced and fair, with privileges and freedoms and rights and all that, because you love that. That's the typical crap we hear all the time. Come out and say what it is. Call it what it is: union busting. You don't like unions. You want to get rid of unions. You do not feel unions serve a purpose. Come out and say that is your intent here. Don't skate around it with some cutesy wording.

Most people in Ontario believe there's a role for unions to play, that unions provide leadership in the workplace and protection for workers. And yes, you know what? They may be inconvenient sometimes to the corporate ownership of a company, because they may force them to do things that are in the best interests of the worker. That's tough, but there has to be a balance and there's got to be protection.

Your government has not offered that and Bill 7 has not offered that. This bill only goes one more step in bashing and destroying unions in this province, and I'm sure not going to be part of it. I believe most Ontarians disagree with you and most Ontarians can see right through your anti-working agenda that you've put forward today again.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): The Tory-Reform Party of Ontario is again today showing its true colours. They are anti-worker, they are anti-union; they are pro-management, they are pro-employer. Let us make no bones about it and let us not kid each other. Those people out there who are looking at the Reform Party as a possible way to vote in this federal election, let this be a lesson to you. What you get is a party that, yes, pushes some hot-button issues, that says, "We're tough on crime," and "We're tough on welfare bums," and a whole bunch of other stuff, to use their language, but what the

real hidden agenda is all about is tipping the scales of balance to where those with money and those with power have it all and the rest of us be damned.

The member, Mr Sheehan, comes before us today with this particular bill and proposes that we undo what has been built in this province over a period of time, not by NDP governments, not by Liberal governments, but legislation that was first pushed by workers in this province through their blood, sweat, toil and tears. They had to be able to get the government of the day, a Conservative government, to recognize that unions and workers have a right to coexist, and if you don't have unions and you don't have the ability for workers to form unions, in the end it will not be a good thing for workers and it will not be a good thing for the economy.

The member proposes to do what? To do away with the Rand formula. The Rand formula is what allows unions to exist to a great degree in this province and across North America. The member comes before us and says, "Let's get rid of the Rand formula; let's do what they do in the United States, in places like Mississippi and Atlanta," where they have right-to-work states, where basically workers don't have the ability to form unions in the way that we do up in this part.

What really is happening here is that the government is trying to make a change to our economy in doing so. They want to move from what we have today in Ontario and Canada, what is determined and called a high-wage economy, where unions and workers get together and negotiate with their employers. They get a fair return in wages for work done for the employer, the employer still makes a dollar, and because we have a lot of consumers in our economy who have a good salary, we have what's called a high-wage economy.

They want to turn that high-wage economy into what you have in the United States, in the southern states especially, which is a low-wage economy, where workers are lucky if they're able to get a job for minimum wage; where workers don't have rights within the workplace when it comes to health and safety issues or whatever it might be; and where the way you attract capital into your community is to say, "Come to our community and we'll allow you to exploit the workers of our community so that you may profit." That's what this government is all about.

I say to those people who are watching, I say to those who are paying attention to this debate, beware of what this Tory-Reform government is doing. There is a hidden agenda here. Yes, the Mike Harris government, like the Reform Party, got elected by pushing some hot-button issues, but there is a hidden agenda and that agenda is, "We will transfer over the power to individual employers and individuals with money and we will take that power away from workers," and people like you and I. You have to have in every economy a balance. What we have in our Ontario economy is a balance, and the government is trying to get rid of that.

I also want to say to the government, and I want to say it directly: Don't think for one second that the people of Ontario are not paying attention to what you are doing and don't think for one second that the unions and the

labour movement are not paying attention to what you're doing, because they are.

We have with us today in our gallery James Moffatt from the Ontario Sheet Metal Workers' union. He is but one representative of the labour movement.

I tell you, you pass this legislation today and it won't be just James Moffatt who will be here; you will have thousands of workers protesting in front of Queen's Park, going before your constituency offices and saying: "Stop these tactics. Stop these attacks on workers. You were elected the government on behalf of the people of Ontario, not against them," and that's exactly where you're going with this piece of legislation.

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I say to the government, think well before you vote on this piece of legislation. Yes, you were elected to govern, but you have to stop this attack on workers. If you pass this legislation, what it basically means is in a short period of time the labour movement, as we know it today, will cease to exist, and that's exactly what you guys are trying to do. If you vote for that today, if this bill passes today at second reading at private members' hour, it sends a very direct message out to the people of this province.

I want to thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak. I know that the member for Nickel Belt wants to have a few words on this bill. Again, I urge all members of this assembly to vote against this legislation because it is purely and simply an attack on workers and workers' rights, trying to move our economy to that of a low-wage economy such as what's found in the United States, where they have the right to work such as the member Frank Sheehan is trying to get people in this Legislature to accept. That I will not do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further debate.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I'm pleased to speak in support of the private member's bill by the member for Lincoln, who, as you know, has been responsible on behalf of our government as chair of the Red Tape Review Commission for numerous pieces of legislation, helping to simplify the process for businesses and job creation in Ontario, to get rid of red tape and to make it easier for business to invest and do business in the province, thereby creating jobs for all of us.

There are other initiatives also. There's a new front-counter operation at the registry office in Whitby now in my riding of Durham Centre which provides services, not only the registry service, the traditional ones, but also gives the ability for people to apply for passports and for birth, marriage and death certificates. All of these are initiatives that our government has taken in order to make Ontario a better place to do business, a more convenient place to do business, less paperwork, less red tape. Certainly the member for Lincoln has played a prominent role in all of that.

In this bill the object is not, as the member for Cochrane South describes, something about affecting the right to unionize. It's not that at all. It is about taking away any compulsion or any coercion or forcing of a person to belong to a particular association in order to

work in Ontario. That's a very important individual right, I'd suggest, that people in the province ought to enjoy, and that is the thrust of this legislation, this proposed act brought forward by the member for Lincoln.

Competition is important. In my riding of Durham Centre we have large international businesses, we have small businesses. Even the small businesses have world mandates. I visited one of them recently and their major competitor in the world isn't in the United States and it isn't in Australia. Their major competitor is in northern Italy. They compete all across western Europe and all across the United States, not against a low-wage jurisdiction in the southern United States, as the member for Cochrane South alleges, but rather against a firm in northern Italy. Similarly, we have businesses in my riding of Durham Centre that compete internationally, that have world mandates from their large international businesses to compete from Canada, from Whitby, across the United States, across western Europe, across Asia, indeed across the world.

When we look at that context and we look at the competition for investment, investment means jobs across the world. I think we have to be cautious about taking away individual rights, coercing persons to belong to associations in order to work and earn a living for themselves and their families in the province of Ontario. Governments don't create jobs of course, but governments can get in the way. By red tape and by laws, governments can inhibit the creation of jobs and get in the way of those who would create jobs in this jurisdiction and in other jurisdictions.

My colleague from Lincoln has pointed out that the public expectations in Ontario are that people, by a large margin, take the view that everyone in the province should have the right to work, to earn a living, to support their family, without being compelled, without being forced to belong to an association in order to have that workplace available to them.

When we look across the world — and I do mean across the world, not just the United States, as the member for Cochrane South refers to — the European court in Strasbourg was involved. In Great Britain, they passed a law back in 1990, some seven years ago now, making it unlawful to refuse a person employment because they would not join a particular association. In Switzerland such a compulsion is null and void. In Belgium such a compulsion of an individual is null and void. The same in France. Since 1956, if we go back that far, my goodness — closed-shop provisions to coerce an employer to hire or maintain employment of only union members have been null and void for many years now, 40 years, in France.

In Japan, New Zealand, Ireland, South America — the American Convention on Human Rights provides in section 8(3): "No one may be compelled to belong to a trade union." The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, affecting 49 African countries, similarly provides: "No one may be compelled to join an association." So we see the pattern across the world.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): This is about the Third World, isn't it? Down to the Third World. Here we come.

Mr Flaherty: This is the world that we compete with. My friend from Nickel Belt says, "The Third World." Switzerland is not the Third World, the last time I heard. Belgium is not the Third World. France isn't the Third World. Western Europe isn't the Third World. The United States isn't the Third World. We have to compete for jobs and the people in my riding want jobs. They want work. They want an opportunity to work in the province of Ontario so they can raise their families and have a decent life and a decent living here and educate their children.

In summary then, I'd like to compliment the member for Lincoln for bringing forward this bill, which will create a better climate for investment in Ontario, which will create jobs for the people of Ontario, which will put us on an even keel with most of the other jurisdictions with whom business and industry in the province are obliged to compete.

I support the bill and I congratulate the member for Lincoln for conceiving, developing and bringing this bill forward in this House for debate.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): May I say at the outset that I will not be supporting this private member's bill this morning and I encourage all members of the House to seriously consider that they too should not support the bill.

I would especially encourage members, like the member who brings this private member's bill forward, to go out into the world and gain some experience on both sides of this issue. If I speak from some of my experience as a member of a union for about eight years, and many of the members of my family as well, people in my family who are part of the business community, you look at the relevance of unions and there is no question that this bill strikes at the very heart of what matters most to unions, and that is the development of the Rand formula.

Coming from Windsor, we probably have a little more history with the Rand formula. It was developed by a judge in 1946 and it was developed specifically to follow one of the most worldwide-renowned strikes in the history of the world. That was the strike at General Motors, which lasted for a very long period of time, involved a huge number of people, hundreds of them, members of the labour force at General Motors. It was a strike that had tremendous ramifications in the community of Windsor, the result of which was a judge making a decision that when the union negotiates a package for its employees, if all of the members benefit from that package, all of them would then pay union dues. In my view, there is a sense of fairness.

Now, the private member brings forward a bill today in the name of fairness, allowing fairness for all members of the community. I would ask the member to tell me what is not fair about every member of a workplace also benefiting from all of the good that the union and employer negotiation results in. That in fact is a sense of fairness.

The greater concern I have is that here is another example of the Progressive Conservative-Reform government of Ontario, another attack on unions, which this

becomes, and yet so many of them, in the last election, actually voted for this Reform government. My concern is that you keep putting one over on workers in Ontario as if you're doing them a favour. In the case of the election, it was this tax cut that they all bought into. Frankly, if you listened to the news this morning, the increase in coffee prices alone has eaten up my tax cut; I don't know about the rest of you. It was so minimal, and yet the effect of the \$5 billion that you borrowed at a time when we could hardly afford to borrow more billions of dollars — you offered the cut.

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Yesterday we heard that Standard and Poor's released its rating again for Ontario. This Conservative government, viewed by the members themselves only as being so pro-business, now has the same rating of AA- as the Bob Rae government had for the last two years of its term, so your economic policies don't work. You are not here to help the workers in Ontario.

Another example: One of the members from Durham speaks about wanting to help workers find jobs. We have a larger number of health care workers without jobs today than ever, and we're going to have more as this trend continues. The more you close hospitals, the more you downsize and dump, the more we lose workers. You say you want to put these people to work, and you cancel the HSTAP program for training, the very thing that workers will need to change and become part of this new world of work. You've cancelled the very programs that offer the training for them to do so. You can't here in private members' hour talk about fairness for workers and say that you want to do this because you want workers to have every opportunity for work, and in the afternoon session introduce legislation that has your health minister eliminate some of the most basic training needs for workers that you, by your own government policy, are displacing. You just can't have it both ways.

This government clearly is not on side with the majority of people who are working in Ontario. This private member's bill is a clear indication of that. The people in Windsor and Essex county have grown up with unions, where the Rand formula began in 1946. Judge Rand made an historic decision when he came down with the ruling and the creation of the Rand formula, which then went across North America, and the result was the development of very good negotiations between employers and unions across North America. All I can tell you is that I personally don't support the bill. I encourage all members of the House also to look at the wider scope of what this government is doing, which is very much against workers.

Mr Laughren: I should make note first of the fact that our labour critic from Hamilton, Dave Christopherson, is not able to be here. He's out of the country. He would dearly love to have been involved in this debate, I can assure you, and we know what position he would have taken.

I have mixed feelings about the introduction of this bill because part of me sees it as simply another manifestation of the ugly, disgusting face of Reform that surfaces within the Tory caucus every now and again. But the

other part of me wants to say to the member for Lincoln, "I'm glad you brought this forward." You know what? It would be fascinating, and I would challenge the members of the government to vote for this bill. I dare you to vote for this bill and make it the law of the province, because you know what? You haven't got the guts to do it. You know and I know that if you ever made this bill the law of this province, there would be utter chaos across the land. You think that encouraging scabs through your replacement worker legislation made the labour movement angry. If you did this, you would be the laughingstock. This bill itself, even without that happening, will be in every union hall in Ontario; you can be absolutely sure of that. It will be raised at every all-candidates meeting in the next election. You just watch.

I want to see, when it comes to five to 12, how many cabinet ministers are in here supporting the member for Lincoln on this bill. Any takers? How many cabinet ministers do you think will be supporting this bill? Any at all? I think not, because all you're doing is pushing a hot button for some of your friends. You don't have the courage or the conviction to proceed with this bill because you know, and I know, that you would be in deep, deep doodoo if you ever did. You couldn't sustain yourselves in your government if you enacted the legislation that's reflected in this bill. You would not be able to do it. All you're doing is setting up poor little Mr Sheehan from Lincoln, sitting in the back benches, to bring forward something that will make the Reform people happy. He's a stooge for you. That's what he is. I hope you understand that, Mr Sheehan. How does it feel to be used like a stooge on the part of the Reform Party of this country? That's all you are. We'll see.

Interjections.

Mr Laughren: I could be totally wrong. Just get down off your hind legs for a minute. I'm almost finished. I just want to say to you that we'll see. I could be wrong. Maybe the cabinet will come in and support Mr Sheehan's bill. I would venture a guess that they no more have the courage to do it than they have to bring in the bill and make it the law of the province of Ontario.

I want to tell you, this is a disgusting anti-worker piece of legislation, absolutely disgusting. I never thought I'd see a Tory party bring it into the House, even in the form of a private member's bill. I would simply say to you, I'll bet you whatever you want to bet that you won't get support for this.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I'm not quite sure which way the member for Nickel Belt is planning on voting on this after that, but I would say that if cabinet ministers don't vote for this, it will be because they have a very important cabinet meeting this morning that they may be at.

I'm privileged to speak to this and I will be speaking in support of my colleague for Lincoln, who I believe recognizes the importance of bringing this matter forward for debate, because it is not as the member for Nickel Belt has said, nor the member for Windsor-Sandwich, nor any of the other speakers who have spoken against this bill. This is not about an anti-union positioning of this government. This is very much a pro-worker bill that is

simply saying to the people of this province that it's high time that the focus be placed on the workers and that workers are given an opportunity to express their free will as to what they want to have happen in the workplace.

I think it's important that we put into context what the situation is in this province now. Employees and unions are free to enter into agreements in this province today whereby all employees are required to be union members. What we're saying here with this legislation, what my colleague intends, is that when such a discussion takes place, there should be the opportunity for individual employees to say, "No, I choose not to be a member of this union."

Mrs Papatello: You didn't think that when you were running in Essex county. You didn't think that in Leamington, when you were down in the Windsor area. That is not what you believed when you ran three times.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich, order.

Mr Klees: I can tell you just from personal experience that I've had many people in my constituency office who have come to me and said, "I do not appreciate the fact that in a democratic society I lose my democratic right the minute I become a member of a particular workforce in a particular company." What is it? Why are we so fearful in giving the right to individual workers to take a position that may well be contrary to a union position? This is simply what the member is trying to achieve here.

As I said before, this is really about what is in the best interests of workers. Let's take a look at some of the facts in other jurisdictions where we have right-to-work legislation.

Mrs Papatello: But you ran in the Windsor area. That's not what you said.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich, come to order.

Mr Klees: Let me just share with you some of the facts. The truth of the matter is that in the United States, it is interesting that of the top 20 job-creating states, 19 of them have right-to-work legislation. If we're interested in workers, if we care about workers, should we not be interested in ensuring that we create an environment in which jobs can be created?

There is extensive evidence that the average after-tax annual income in right-to-work states is \$3,000 higher than in non-right-to-work states. Why is that? If we're concerned about individual workers, the quality of life, job creation for men, women and young people who are coming into our workforce, is it not incumbent upon this government and members of the opposition to do what is right for workers in this province?

1150

Mrs Papatello: You have never seen a correct analysis of those numbers. In the end, Ontario workers cost less in those studies.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich, come to order, please.

Mr Klees: The other fact is that the gap in right-to-work legislation states is considerably less between the rich and the poor than it is in non-right-to-work states.

What we have to do is come to the focus of what this is all about. What this legislation is about is putting the focus on people and away from organizations. I find it interesting that at a time when the opposition waxes eloquent in their defence of the unemployed, of the vulnerable in our society, on this particular issue you come out in favour of the large, monopoly union organizations rather than advocating on behalf of the men, women and young people who need jobs, who deserve jobs and who, many times, are prevented from having their say in the workplace simply because they're a member of a union.

We believe that unions are important. We also believe that the rights of individuals are important.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What is most interesting about this bill is that the extreme right-wing members of the government caucus are the ones who are most enthusiastic about it. That sends a little bit of a message out there.

I see certain political parties right now that are appealing to blue-collar workers across the province and, with some hot-button issues, have had an opportunity to resonate well on some of these issues. But many of the people who are industrial workers and those in other workplaces must recognize that the real agenda of the right-wing conservative — I'm speaking of a small-c conservative this time — begins to appear when you see legislation of this kind: anti-labour legislation. Let all of those who are working in industrial plants, let all of those who are working in workplaces where the union has won for the employees some substantial benefits and decent wages and working conditions, let all of those workers know what these right-wing parties are really about.

Yes, they may sound good on certain issues, they may resonate well on certain simplistic issues, but when it comes down to protecting pensions, when it comes down to protecting social programs, when it comes down to protecting health care, when it comes down to protecting the rights of workers, these parties are prepared to begin an assault on the rights of those workers.

It's very instructive to see that you're not seeing the moderate members of the Conservative caucus up speaking in favour of this bill; you are seeing people who have extreme right-wing views. As I say, for some I understand it; for some people out there who have these views because it would be beneficial to them, I can understand it. But let workers out there know, workers who might be tempted to vote for right-wing parties because one of these right-wing parties might be bashing somebody somewhere or bashing a group in the country, that the real agenda of those parties is to look after the wealthiest and the most influential people in our society and not so-called ordinary Canadians.

You can dress up the leaders of those parties in certain uniforms, the denim and the open collars and so on, but when it comes down to it, they really represent the interests of the wealthiest and most powerful people in our society. Any moderate member of the Conservative caucus who would vote for this legislation should be ashamed of herself or himself. Bill Davis, when he was in power, brought forward legislation that he believed to

be balanced. He had some arguments with members of the trade union movement and some of those members had some arguments with the Premier, but what you found was that at least they could engage in a meaningful dialogue with that Conservative government — Premier Davis and Premier Robarts; I can look back to at least those two premiers — so we saw this legislation come forward.

What the member for Lincoln is in fact attacking is previous Conservative legislation. What he really wants is for people to be able to get all the advantages of a collective agreement without having to pay the union dues. The people have an opportunity to vote for certification or not vote for certification of a union. If they don't want one, they can participate in that process.

But this represents an attack on something on which I thought there was a consensus among moderate people of goodwill right across this province, and now we see extreme right-wing legislation being proposed that must really make some of the members of the Conservative caucus very uncomfortable, having been part of a government where that government tried, didn't always succeed, but tried to provide a sense of consensus and balance in labour legislation.

I will certainly be voting opposed to this. I will be voting against this bill, as I'm sure many of the moderate members of the government will be voting against this legislation, which is anti-worker, which is anti-employer, which is not about providing rights except to those who wish to exploit people within the workplace. I think it would be extremely dangerous and send out a bad signal for this government to approve of this kind of legislation. I hope some of the government members will vote against it.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sheehan, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr Sheehan: It's always interesting to hear the opposition talk. Always in the theoretical, never do they advance any solid facts to support their position. This is not anti-labour. This is not anti-workers' rights. It's about protecting their rights. It's about advancing their cause. It's about advancing the standards and advancing the cause of the consumer.

Nobody's going to dispute the contribution the labour unions made. I suggest to you it was made in a different time and a different place prior to what we are now confronted with in world-class competition. We suggest that they no longer require hothouse protection and right-to-work legislation. I suggest that the labour union movement would be well served if they started to figure out how they can help their workers advance into the 21st century and accept reality where they find it.

This legislation is not about protecting General Motors or TRW. The big unions and the big corporations are equally balanced and they deserve each other, all right? But it is about protecting the small businessman who is not up to the large well-financed attacks of the union on their rights to exist and continue. We are not about beating up on the working man. We are for the working man. We are talking about advancing his freedom and his right and the necessity that he become responsible for his activities.

COURTS OF JUSTICE AND
MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES TRIBUNAUX JUDICIAIRES
ET LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE
DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): We will deal first with ballot item number 79, standing in the name of Mr Ouellette. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, will you please rise.

Mr Ouellette has moved second reading of Bill 130. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried. The bill shall be referred to committee of the whole.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I would ask that it be referred to the justice committee.

The Acting Speaker: Is that agreed? Is there a majority in favour? All those in favour, please rise and remain standing. A majority in favour. The bill will be referred to the justice committee.

EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS AND
FREEDOMS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LES DROITS ET
LIBERTÉS DES EMPLOYÉS

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): We will deal next with ballot item number 80. Mr Sheehan has moved second reading of Bill 131. If there are any members opposed to this bill being voted on, will you please rise.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. To the member for Nickel Belt, I can't take a point of order in the middle of a vote.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	Sheehan, Frank
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Flaherty, Jim	Leadston, Gary L.	Tascona, Joseph N.
Fox, Gary	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Wood, Bob

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please stand and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Hastings, John	Maves, Bart
Arnott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Kwinter, Monte	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Boushy, Dave	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Lankin, Frances	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Laughren, Floyd	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	

The Acting Speaker: The ayes are 15; the nays are 20. I declare the motion lost.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I know it's a bit unusual but I wonder if we could have unanimous consent to extend the length for voting for another five minutes to allow some cabinet ministers to get in here to support Mr Sheehan's bill.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? No. I hear a no.

All matters relating to private members' public business have now been completed. I do now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1208 to 1331.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I want again to express my strong concerns about Bill 104, the bigger school boards bill. It was and is my contention that the people in northern Ontario will not be represented adequately on these mega-boards encompassing in many cases tens of thousands of square kilometres.

For example, English-language public school board number 2 will have, according to the education commission, but eight trustees. This means that the 15,000 people living hundreds of kilometres northwest of Sault Ste Marie in communities like White River, Wawa, Dubreuilville and Chapleau will not have any representation on the school board. How can that possibly be?

Further, Hornepayne, which requested an isolate school board designation or, failing that, to be included with district school board number 1, has been included with district school board number 2 and will be totally without any board representation.

The bigger school boards act is the problem, and the implementation of this act is becoming a nightmare. At a minimum, the minister must give the communities minimal representation, because this school board is an area of 70,000 square kilometres. Minister, use some common sense: Expand the representation.

WOODGREEN COMMUNITY CENTRE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): This June, Woodgreen Community Centre in my riding of Riverdale celebrates 60 years of service to east Toronto neighbourhoods.

As many of you will be aware, Woodgreen is a fixture of east Toronto life. Woodgreen Community Centre, whose motto is "A partner in community building," is a neighbourhood-based, multicultural, non-profit organization providing a range of services to our communities. These include but are not limited to children's services such as day camp and child care; community support services and programs for new Canadians, seniors and persons with disabilities; various counselling programs, home support, employment and training services; and non-profit housing. They also offer legal services and

programs for persons who are socially isolated or have a history of mental illnesses.

Woodgreen has a long history of service to east Toronto. Founded in 1936 by Rev Ray McCleary, it was run out of his house until a centre was built in 1947. Since then, it has continued to add and expand its programming to meet the ever-changing needs of east Toronto communities.

I'm proud of Woodgreen's record of service and commitment to a healthy, safe and inclusive community. Again I ask members to join me in thanking the staff, board and volunteers, past and present, for 60 years of service and to wish them all the best for the challenges that lie ahead as they continue to contribute to the health of our city. Thank you, Woodgreen.

BRUCE TRAIL

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): I'm delighted to remind the House that next month marks the 30th anniversary of the opening of the Bruce Trail.

As a resident of Milton for most of my life, I have a long-standing appreciation for the natural wonder and beauty of the Niagara Escarpment.

We're all very fortunate that in the early 1960s a small group of people had the vision to imagine a walking trail that stretched the length of the escarpment, from Queens-ton to Tobermory, and the determination and spirit to make their vision a reality. In June we will be celebrating that spirit.

We are renewing the commitment made 30 years ago to ensure that the natural environment of the escarpment along the Bruce Trail is protected and conserved for future generations.

We're also acknowledging the generous cooperation of local landowners who have given permission for the trail to cross their property. Without their kind collaboration, the dream of an unbroken trail across the escarpment could not be realized.

Finally, we are recognizing the hard work of the Bruce Trail clubs whose members have made the dream come true. They are the volunteers who are building this trail mile by mile. Their efforts have given thousands of people an opportunity to experience first hand the natural splendour of the Niagara Escarpment.

In closing, I want to commend all the volunteers for their tireless dedication to one of Ontario's natural wonders, the Bruce Trail, and invite all members of the House to come out to the trail and discover its wonders for themselves.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It is always interesting to observe how hot-button issues that stir anger against some groups in society or play upon the emotions of the electorate in reality serve to mask the real agenda of political parties.

How many senior citizens who voted for the Harris team, the Conservative Party that was imitating the Reform Party, thought the new right-wing government would cast seniors, students and other vulnerable people to the wolves by killing rent controls and making con-

versions of rental buildings to condominium buildings so easy?

How many seniors would have imagined that the party whose television commercials bashing social service recipients or employment equity programs, encouraging resentment against certain people in our society, would force senior citizens to pay user fees for prescription drugs or close hospitals so necessary to our older population?

Once again there are politicians who are purveying a message of hate and resentment to voters and offering simplistic answers to complicated questions. These messages that provoke anger so often cloud the real intentions of political parties of protest, parties which portray themselves as spokespersons for the average, ordinary individual when in fact they are the servants of the rich and powerful.

Workers in our factories and plants in Ontario should take note of the dismantling of the Workers' Compensation Board and the kind of anti-worker bill that was introduced by a government MPP this morning.

Those simple and inflammatory slogans are so often a smokescreen for an extreme right-wing agenda which would place pensions, health care and social programs in jeopardy. We should always look before we leap.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Yesterday my colleague from Dovercourt and I went to the rally to save Doctors Hospital. They were chanting to this government, "Take the bricks, keep the mix."

Doctors Hospital has a long and proud tradition of responding to the needs of its communities, and in this case Doctors Hospital responds to the various needs of the linguistic communities in their languages, because it serves Chinese Canadians, Portuguese Canadians, Spanish-speaking Canadians, and a lot of African communities as well, in their own language. That to me is important.

What they're doing and what is being proposed is to subsume Doctors Hospital in the Toronto Western. The fear is that the long and proud tradition of responding to the communities will be lost unless they have an independent board that will be there to ascertain that the history they have had with those communities is there. They are afraid, in spite of what the minister says, that the restructuring committee will not respond to that basic demand. What they want is an assurance from the minister that if the restructuring committee fails to heed that advice, he, as the boss of the health care system, will intervene to make sure Doctors Hospital and its services are maintained.

SCARBOROUGH ECONOMY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today as the member for Scarborough Centre. Scarborough's economy, like Ontario's economy, is booming. Investment is coming to Scarborough; jobs are being created. This is good news, and the people of Scarborough and the people in my riding are letting me know that they support the decisions of this government.

Here are some examples of companies that said they are investing in Scarborough: Eli Lilly Canada further expanded, bringing 75 new, high-value, high-tech jobs; Novopharm is creating 200 new jobs; Clearnet, Cinram, Cosmetica, Leyland Industries have all said yes to Scarborough and they have said yes to Ontario; Lees Development is building its third new residential tower; a new textile manufacturer is coming to Scarborough, bringing 600 new jobs.

1340

Millions of dollars are being invested commercially at Cedarbrae Mall at Markham Road and Lawrence Avenue in Scarborough Centre. Cedarbrae Mall is getting more than a facelift. It's becoming a whole new service centre for people to shop and get the services they require. Coffee Time Donuts, a Scarborough company, Loblaw's, Reitman's, CIBC and others have all made a further commitment to Scarborough and to the people of Scarborough Centre.

This is not government money. It is private enterprise investing in our community. All these companies have said they are committed to Scarborough, that they want to be located in a thriving community and in a prosperous province. Why? Because our plan as a government is working. The business and investment climate is being created; taxes are being lowered; jobs are coming; investment is coming. These are not just numbers from Statistics Canada. This is something that people can see. They are able to see it in the riding of Scarborough Centre.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'd like to read a letter that I just received in the mail, which I think is very typical of all seniors across Ontario.

"Sandra Pupatello:

"I don't know if you're the person I'm supposed to write to, but I hope you can give me an answer.

"I have to pay the first \$100 on my prescription and \$6.11 after for prescriptions.

"Last September 11, I paid" the drugstore "\$100 and was told that was for a year, which would be good until September 1997. Well, I went to have prescriptions filled today...and they told me I had to pay another \$100, as the new year started April 1.

"Doesn't Mike Harris get enough of our seniors' money? As I was told, a year is 12 months and I should have been paid up until September 1997. The way they're figuring from September to April is just seven months.

"When I asked the girl in the drugstore why, she replied, 'I guess it's a short year.' Maybe for government, but I feel that's my money. I should have five months' credit on the \$100 I paid. If they were going to start their new year in April 1997, why didn't they just collect for those months, not a year?

"I would appreciate you looking into this, as I know I won't be the only one getting cheated by Mike Harris. Thank you.

"Marion McAuliffe" — a resident and constituent of mine.

Marion, I just want to say you are not the only senior being cheated, and on Monday, voting Reform or Conservative gives you more of this.

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I rise to once again bring to the government's attention, particularly to the attention of the Minister of Citizenship, the lack of progress by this government on the issue of access to trades and professions.

The problem is essentially this: We have in Ontario thousands of people who are trained in various skills or professions in their country of origin. When they come to Ontario, they continue to face roadblocks in getting those credentials assessed and recognized and translated into Ontario equivalencies in a way that will allow them to have fair access to the various trades and professions in this province.

The answer, and the minister knows it, is to establish a credential assessment service to ensure that those roadblocks that now stand in the way of many residents of Ontario are removed. Because it hasn't been done, we have thousands of people in this province who, rather than practise their profession or use the skills they have in a particular skill area, have to do menial jobs, other low-paying jobs — and that's if they're lucky to get those jobs. More often than not, they have to rely on social assistance.

For a government that says it's committed to giving people a hand up, it has shown very little progress in this area in the two years it has been the government. Once again, I want to say to this government, take the steps necessary to establish in this province a credential assessment service and give all Ontarians fair access to jobs.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): Three Ontario students, Mike Soley, Steve Windle and Mark MacDonald of Brantford, Ontario, recently won medals at the Ontario Technological Skills Competition in Kitchener for excellence in their respective fields of carpentry, automotive mechanics and print technology.

Today Mike and Steve, who have been involved in the Ontario youth apprenticeship and cooperative education programs at Pauline Johnson Collegiate, are going for gold at the national competition in Red Deer, Alberta. The national event has competitions in a variety of technical skills, ranging from bricklaying to automotive repair and cosmetology.

The accomplishments of these students show the real benefits such programs have in improving both the knowledge and skills levels of students. More important, it's giving them practical work experience in addition to a sound education, as well as exposing them to valuable career opportunities in our trade sector.

These partnerships with outside business have strengthened the ability of schools across Ontario to help our students achieve their goals. I trust that the reforms our government will be making to the apprenticeship system in the future will increase success stories such as these for Ontario students.

Today, along with my colleagues from Brantford and Brant-Haldimand, I'd like to invite the members in the House to join me in congratulating these students on their accomplishments and wishing them the best of luck as they represent Ontario at the National Skills Competition today.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's my understanding that when you make your rulings — and I hope you'll hear me out on this — you look to the standing orders, to precedent and to traditions of this place. It's on the latter issue that I am concerned and ask you to make a ruling.

The last time that the Ontario Legislature sat on a federal election day was 1874. It seems to me that's a long-standing and legitimate tradition in this assembly. I think for that reason, since many members want to be and indeed should be back in their ridings on election day, Monday, June 2, you — and I hope you will consider this seriously — should rule a Monday sitting of this Legislature to be out of order.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Let me say to the member for Nickel Belt, you're right about how rulings are made in this Legislature from the Speaker's dais. Let's be clear. First, we will check with the standing orders. If you don't find it in the standing orders, then you begin to move on, and you move on, obviously, to practice and precedent, and then you move on to the authorities.

The fact is that we find the answer to your particular concern in the standing orders. The standing orders strictly state that unless there's a motion or unanimous consent, then we should in fact be here on Monday. In the absence of a motion from the government and in the absence of unanimous consent, I can only say to you that I need go no further than the standing orders. That therefore means that we'll in fact be sitting on Monday, June 2.

Mr Laughren: Allow me to ask for unanimous consent for this Legislature not to sit on Monday, June 2.

The Speaker: That's perfectly within order and I'll do that now. The member for Nickel Belt is seeking unanimous consent for this House not to sit on Monday, June 2, due to the federal election. Agreed? I heard a number of noes.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Just one second. I need some order so I can hear the point of order from the member for Dovercourt.

Mr Silipo: It's also a request for unanimous consent, for a different one, and that is because of the importance of this issue. As my colleague from Nickel Belt has pointed out, this would be the first time since 1874 that the House will sit on an election day.

The Speaker: This is different, right?

Mr Silipo: I would like to request unanimous consent that the House not sit on Monday, June 2, but sit instead on Friday, June 6, I believe it is.

The Speaker: Member for Dovercourt, I dealt with that issue. If you want to move —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Let me finish. If you want to move that we sit on Friday, you can ask for unanimous consent for that. But I've already dealt with the fact of not sitting on Monday and you didn't get unanimous consent, so all that's left open for you now is to request unanimous consent to sit on Friday because the first motion didn't receive unanimous consent.

Mr Silipo: Perhaps if I tried it this way, if I could ask for unanimous consent to have the House sit on Friday, June 6, rather than Monday, June 2.

The Speaker: At this point in time, I could see us getting into a very difficult situation by submitting all the days until the end of the year and so on. On the proviso that I'll move that — member for Dovercourt, I'll be happy to put that last point on unanimous consent, but after that I think it's decided.

The member for Dovercourt is requesting unanimous consent of the House to sit on Friday as opposed to Monday, due to the federal election. Agreed? I heard a lot of noes.

1350

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, let me try the point of order with you this way. It may have some validity. I trust your judgement at all times on this. I believe it says that you must have four hours to be able to vote in a federal election and in a provincial election. With the House sitting that day and members coming in from all over Ontario, I'm wondering whether indeed members of this House would have an opportunity, particularly those who live farther away, to vote on election day and if we aren't contravening the federal act in some way.

The Speaker: You're into legal questions at this point, and I don't have the capacity, the wherewithal or the technical expertise to answer these questions. All I can tell you is that if we didn't sit on Monday, it would only be on account of a motion or unanimous consent. It's clearly not going to happen through unanimous consent, so all that's left open is a motion from the government. It doesn't appear to be forthcoming, so I think everyone should be prepared to come Monday and work.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Members will be aware that there appears in today's Orders and Notices paper a notice of an opposition day standing in the name of Mr Hampton. Standing order 42(a) provides for five opposition days in a sessional period. I want to inform the House that the allotment of five opposition days has been used. The notice is therefore out of order and shall be removed from the Orders and Notices paper.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On that point, Mr Speaker — and I understand your ruling; we are certainly aware of the standing orders with respect to the maximum number of opposition days — that notice is filed in accordance with an agreement between the three parties. I believe the matter will be dealt with next week and we will refile at that time.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. Your government has gone to unconscionable and ultimately undeliverable extremes trying to download services on to municipalities, all to serve one purpose: to get control of educational funding. Now that you've got control, nobody knows what it is you intend to do with it.

Last week's announcement of the long-awaited funding formula tells us absolutely nothing, because there are no numbers attached to it, and quite clearly, a funding formula without numbers is absolutely meaningless. When are we going to see the dollars? When will we know what kinds of choices school boards are going to have to make as they try and meet the needs of students with the very limited dollars you're going to provide?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): We announced last week one of the structures. We're talking with people in the education community and other folks about how we can meet the needs of every individual student across the province. I think our intention and commitment is very clear on this matter: We will meet the needs of every student in the province and deliver a high quality of education to every student in the province. This is part of that process.

Mrs McLeod: Words and intent have really no credibility from a minister who has already cut \$533 million from the operating grants of school boards and has bragged that he can take at least another half a billion dollars from those same school boards. There is one thing certain, and that is there will too few dollars in your new funding formula, which as of now is simply words, to meet the needs of every student.

One of the issues of great concern to parents of young children is the future of our junior kindergarten programs. Twenty-five school boards have already been forced to eliminate junior kindergarten because of your funding cuts. In your proposed funding formula you will have special grants for English as a second language, French immersion and special education. I'm sure the dollars will be inadequate in those areas, but at least you've recognized that those programs are valuable and they need special funding.

But junior kindergarten is not in any special category. It used to be. You ended that, and under your new formula junior kindergarten and its value are still going to be weighed against librarians and guidance counselling and computers and class sizes. Minister, are you prepared to see junior kindergarten in this province simply disappear and then try and say boards didn't think it was important?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Once again today either the research department or someone in the employ of the member opposite, perhaps the member opposite all by herself, is just plain misinformed on this subject. We've made our position quite clear in the past. We will be looking at providing an allocation model that will meet all of the needs of all of the students, and that includes the very young students.

We have said in the past that we're looking at providing those services and looking at having the maximum flexibility possible for people to choose the services that meet the needs of the community, whether that be full-day senior kindergarten or half-day junior kindergarten, half-day senior kindergarten. We're looking now and we're going to ask for some advice on which of those programs should be made available, where in the province, how they should be funded and how much they will cost, because we recognize those as valuable programs.

We've said that publicly on many occasions, so I wonder if there's not some mischief behind the member opposite's question, perhaps looking to misinform rather than inform the public of Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: The mischief is in playing games with words when we're talking about educational openings, possibilities for young children. Junior kindergarten, as the minister knows well, is lumped into what he calls a foundation grant and it will indeed have to compete for funding with class size, computers, librarians, guidance teachers and even buying textbooks. The minister knows that full well. He knows full well the kinds of impossible choices he has already forced on school boards because of his funding cuts. As of today, I tell the minister, the board in my home town has just had to lay off another 81 teachers. Those are the kinds of choices being forced on school boards.

Minister, there's another area of concern, and that's what's going to happen to adult education, the needs of adults competing against the needs of younger students. You are going to have a special grant for credit courses for students aged 21 and over. Will you guarantee today that adult students will get the same funding as other students? Will you guarantee that adults will get a fair second chance?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Now the member opposite goes from the sublime to the ridiculous. Let me quote to you from our news release, which in some way you have missed or has somehow been gone over by your research staff. It says very clearly, a quotation from myself: "This exercise is about getting the fundamentals of high-quality education right. As such, it marks a major step forward in ensuring that education dollars go where they are most needed." Most of us recognize that's into the classroom, to the students and teachers of the province of Ontario. Our commitments are very clear, and if the member opposite wants to look through this, she'll find a reference to those early childhood investments, to the investments in our youngest people.

As far as adult education is concerned, if the question was whether we will fund adults like we fund adolescents, whether we will assume that the cost of delivery for adults is the same as for adolescents, like your government did, no, we won't. We'll recognize that there's a difference between adults and adolescents. Most people in the province can see that. If the member opposite can't see that, perhaps she should consult with some of the other folks in Ontario.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. Your cuts are causing a crisis

in health care across Ontario and in my own community in the Golden Horseshoe area. Last year, in the final nine months, on 21 different occasions all four emergency departments in the city of Hamilton at the four hospitals were closed at the same time — on 21 occasions.

Joe Brant in Burlington: On numerous occasions the emergency department was shut down for up to five and a half hours. Niagara region hospitals: emergency departments shut down.

This leaves potentially up to one million people in an urban centre in this province without emergency service. We are talking about heart attack victims, stroke victims, accident victims. We are talking about children whose lives are at risk as a result of accidents and illness, Minister. Your cuts are putting those people's lives in jeopardy because they cannot access an emergency department.

I want to ask you very clearly. In view of the crisis we are facing in Hamilton, Niagara, Burlington, will you guarantee today that this type of crisis situation we have seen in the last six months to a year will not occur again and that those departments will be open for people when they need them?

1400

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I assure the honourable member that the critical bypass, which is actually what happens — there's a whole set of procedures in place. It happens around the province as part of day-to-day affairs in the province. There is concern in Hamilton about the number of times the ambulances go on critical bypass, but I would plead with the honourable member never to say that those emergency rooms of those hospitals are closed. What it is is a set of very cautious protocols that indicate that the best service is available at the next hospital because that one is extremely busy. It's a volume problem.

The hospitals are not closed. It is against the law for any hospital or any doctor or any ambulance to refuse to provide care, and they do it the best they can. Critical bypass does concern the ministry in terms of its frequency over the last year in Hamilton, and we're working on that.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: There is a meeting on June 5 with all the officials involved to look at exactly that. That's exactly why, one of the major reasons, the Health Services Restructuring Commission is there.

Mr Agostino: Concern from the minister is not enough. It is happening because you have cut funding from hospitals. When all four in the city of Hamilton are closed at the same time for emergency services, it is a crisis. You cut \$84 million out of hospitals in Hamilton, Burlington and Niagara.

Joe Brant in Burlington yesterday had 17 people waiting on a stretcher in the emergency department to get into a bed. In Hamilton up to 18 people routinely wait at St Joseph's hospital in the emergency department because they can't get into a bed. Among those folks, Mr Bruce Tait, 50 years old, suffered a stroke on Monday; he's still sitting on a stretcher at Joe Brant in the emergency department. Mr Charles Green, 74, has been sitting on a stretcher since Tuesday at St Joseph's hospital in Hamilton.

Simply, it is not enough. You can blame the feds, you can do what you want, but the reality is that you said you weren't going to cut health care. Don't blame anyone else. You said you weren't going to cut health care. That was your commitment. You have cut health care, and that's why people can't get into a hospital.

Will you commit today to reinstate the funding you've cut out of those hospitals to ensure —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister?

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member knows full well that it was his government and the previous government that cut 11,000 hospital beds in this province. It is his party at the federal government that has cut \$2.1 billion. It is this government that has an all-time-high health care budget, up to \$17.8 billion, plus over \$2 billion for restructuring over the next few years. We're spending more money on health care in this province than we ever have. We're recognizing the growth and aging of the population.

The reason the commission is in Hamilton is because, as in other parts of the province, there shouldn't be these problems. The nurses' associations, the doctors', many other associations have said it's not because there isn't enough money in health care; there's more than enough money in health care. The money has to go into more patient services so we cut down on the number of critical bypass situations that occur. We need more services; that's what the commission is doing.

The honourable member is wrong to say that those hospitals cut any front-line services. They did not. In the old days they cut beds. Now they're cutting duplication and administration —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Mr Agostino: I appreciate the Mulroney response, but that doesn't help my folks in Hamilton and Burlington and Niagara.

Minister, you said you weren't going to cut health care. I'll tell you why this is happening. It's because beds have been cut in hospitals. People are waiting in emergency rooms trying to get into a regular room for service, and they can't do that because you've cut the beds.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister, that's totally inappropriate and out of order. I ask you to withdraw that comment.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I withdraw.

Mr Agostino: I find it amazing that the minister would suggest that it's bull that people are waiting in emergency departments in Hamilton and Burlington. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Cam Jackson, the member for Burlington South, says the hospital in Burlington should not accept people from Hamilton, because it's too crowded.

Ian Darcel, the chief of medicine at Joe Brant, says: "The hospital is in a critical situation. We can't handle the influx of patients."

Dr Bellissimo at St Joe's says, "When everybody is on bypass, the system fails."

The supervisor for ambulance services in Hamilton says: "It's a crap shoot if they're all on critical bypass. You go where you go."

Minister, you have reduced health care in Ontario to a crap shoot. If you get sick or have a heart attack or a stroke and you get lucky, if there's a hospital emergency department open, you go; otherwise, you're out of luck and you may die waiting in that ambulance.

Minister, again I ask you: Will you commit today to reinstate the necessary funding to reopen —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister?

Hon Mr Wilson: We are currently reviewing the operating plans of those hospitals. As I did two weeks ago with Sick Children's Hospital and St Michael's Hospital, extra trauma money is provided as we reconcile the books every year, millions of dollars more to make sure that services are provided to people. We're reviewing those operating plans now. I know your hospitals will not be putting forward any cuts to their emergency departments; that's not allowed. We'll be reviewing those budgets to make sure the savings are only coming out of administration, duplication and waste.

The Ontario Nurses' Association had ads in the paper in January saying there's 30% waste. The Ontario Hospital Association itself says there's all kinds of waste. We spend enough money on health care. Instead of your federal Liberal cuts, we're spending a record amount on health care.

I hope you're going to talk to Sheila Copps about this, because she seems to have a lot of opinions, and you try to wipe your hands clear. I think it's immoral and unethical the way the federal government goes around and just ignores a \$2-billion cut to health care. We've had to cut every other ministry and put into our number one priority, health care —

Mr Agostino: You made a commitment.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, I'm warning you to come to order.

New question; third party.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. You will be aware that there were two reports released in Metro today. One is the Metro Report Card on Children. It is following up on previous work by the Metro Task Force on Services to Young Children and Families, which showed that 89,000 children under the age of 10 are living in poverty in Metro Toronto. The second report is the 1997 Community Agencies Survey for Metro.

The first report shows a direct correlation between access to services and the health of communities. It states very clearly that a critical mass of services must be reached, that enough children and families must receive access to service, for the whole local community to benefit.

But the second report, the Community Agencies Survey, shows that your government's cutbacks, in combination with the federal government's cutbacks, have resulted in the loss of 151 programs in Metro last year. That's on top of 162 programs that were cancelled in 1995. Minister, do these findings concern you?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I'm aware of both reports. We haven't

yet received final copies. I look forward to going through them. They make some excellent recommendations and also highlight some serious concerns with the way the system is working. That's one reason we have the number of reforms under way that we do, so we can try to address some of those very serious problems.

Ms Lankin: I'm going to take that as a yes, that you're concerned. I guess now we'll see what you're prepared to do about it.

Here's what it means to be a child growing up in a high-risk area of Metro: 32.4% higher rate of abuse by family members and 59.8% higher by non-family members; 18% higher rate of attempted suicides under the age of 19. It goes on. The numbers — and those are children behind those numbers — are horrifying, but your government and the federal government are cutting services that are essential to the wellbeing of children and communities. The only thing that has remained constant is the municipal level, but your downloading has now put that at risk.

1410

I want to quote to you from a political associate of yours, Gordon Chong, who says: "The supports we rely on to maintain our civil society have come under increasing stress. All levels of government need to have both a moral and financial duty to support the social infrastructure that is so critical to ensuring healthy communities."

Minister, are you prepared to stop the download and roll back your cuts to community agencies and to pressure the federal government to do the same with respect to transfers to the province of Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I'm certainly prepared to join the honourable member opposite in pressuring Ottawa so that instead of just doing across-the-board cuts, as has happened in the past, they would take the time to set some priorities as we have done here in Ontario. For example, health care is one of our major priorities, where we've maintained spending, as my colleague keeps mentioning, despite the cuts from Ottawa. I'd be quite happy to join with her in pressuring Ottawa to try and set some key priorities as we have done.

Second, though, I think both reports highlight that the system as it's currently structured out there — with the multitude of agencies, with the problem people have finding access to the services they need, with ministry funding rules, programs etc — hampers the ability of that system to serve people. I think that makes the case very well for why we have a complete restructuring exercise going on right now, being led in the communities and by the communities.

Ms Lankin: Minister, I appreciate your support in calling on the federal government to stop the downloading to provinces, but it is — it would not be parliamentary to say hypocritical — but your position is bizarre.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): It's really unparliamentary and you can't even say that. You must withdraw that comment.

Ms Lankin: I withdraw that it would be unparliamentary to say it is hypocritical. It is bizarre to say —

The Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine, this is your time. Just withdraw "hypocritical," please.

Ms Lankin: I withdraw it.

It is bizarre to say, then, that you somehow are off the hook, because your cuts, in combination with the federal cuts, have cancelled over 300 programs to families. The supports don't say that you need fewer programs or rationalized programs, they talk about a critical access.

The Metro task force report is called First Duty, and it's to our kids. I've got to tell you, Minister, kids are at risk. Kids' futures are at risk. Kids' lives are at risk. This report calls on you to work to set goals and targets linked to the indicators of health and wellbeing that can be used to measure progress on the situation of children.

Minister, will you commit today to work with all members of this Legislature, through the standing committee on social development, to develop these goals and targets and then to formally adopt them and implement policies to achieve them?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I really don't think it's necessary to try and spend the efforts of an all-party committee to set targets and goals when we are already doing exactly what needs to be done out there in the area of children's services. The list is quite lengthy; for example, our breakfast programs — 400 child nutrition groups have got support from our government to help 26,000 children with nutritional needs; \$20 million to double the number of preschool children who have speech and language disorders; \$10 million for the healthy babies initiative, where we're going to have public health professionals and nurses out there screening those high-risk families to prevent the problems; \$15 million for child welfare, because we know that system has flaws that need to be improved. I could go on and on.

We recognize very clearly that the supports for children in this province need to be improved. They needed to be improved when the honourable member was there, and they didn't manage to get it done. We're going to get it done because the children deserve it.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. This is the minister who thinks it's his responsibility to add copper and zinc to the diet of the fish in Lake Ontario. I'm looking forward to hearing about the benefits he will be promising people from the 4,000 litres of radioactive water that leak into the Ottawa River every day from the Chalk River nuclear complex. It must be quite a challenge for his reduced staff to even keep track of all of the environmental time bombs that are suddenly blowing up around him.

Minister, you've cut \$200 million at least from your ministry budget; you've laid off over 750 people, including monitors and experts, scientists of every kind. I want to know today what you are going to do to assure us that the water people drink from the Ottawa River and the fish they catch in the river are not endangering their health.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I did find out, as did the member opposite, the problem with regard to Chalk River, with regard to the water quality and the traces of radioactivity that were

going into that water. I am very concerned about that and, as a result, I have contacted and I am in contact with the Atomic Energy corporation, which owns Chalk River, and the Atomic Energy Control Board, which regulates that particular facility.

Ms Churley: I guess the minister thinks that'll solve it. I'd like to hear back as soon as possible what the feds are telling him. But I expect him to be responsible for the drinking water of the people in Ontario, and particularly as it is so close to his own riding, I expected a little better answer than that. The more we hear about leaks and dumping from Ontario Hydro plants and the Chalk River complex, it's clear that the few people you have left at the ministry are going to be very, very busy.

I want to return, however, to the copper and zinc in Lake Ontario, the ones that you think are good for fish, remember? Supposedly Ontario Hydro is undertaking an internal review of the dumping of 1,000 tonnes of copper and zinc from the nuclear plant. I don't think that anybody in Ontario can have confidence that an internal review is going to get at the truth of this matter. It has been covered up for 25 years. What we need here is an independent investigation. Will the minister commit right now, today, to ask the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario to make a full report on this affair?

Hon Mr Sterling: Under the Environmental Bill of Rights, there is a section which allows a citizen to come to me, as the minister, and request an investigation into the particular matter. No one has done that at the present time.

The second part is that I'd like to announce to the Legislature — I thought the member would have known by now — that Ontario Hydro has already taken action with regard to the copper condensing pipes around the four reactors on Pickering A. They have said they are going to replace that beginning in 1998 — not beginning in 2000 — with titanium, which will not have the same kind of abrasive reductions to the insides of those tubes as copper does. So they have taken the action already, notwithstanding that there is still the present study going on. I think they have acted responsibly and that they are acting with regard to the copper loading that is going on in the lake and, therefore, are addressing it.

Ms Churley: Minister, we're not just talking about the replacing of those pipes there. Of course I heard about that. We're talking about up to 25 years of dumping these products, these metals, that accumulate in the fish for years. It could be 100 years or more before it's cleaned up properly, before it goes away. We're talking about a coverup here. The people will not have the confidence, after something like this happened, that Ontario Hydro can make an unbiased investigation as to what happened. The revelations at Chalk River are only going to raise the temperature on this matter.

I don't think you need to wait for somebody else to ask for this. You should be concerned about what's going on over there and you should ask the Environmental Commissioner yourself to investigate what happened there so that the people of Ontario will have confidence that it will never happen again. Will you commit to that today?

Hon Mr Sterling: As soon as someone brings me evidence that Ontario Hydro is breaking any laws which were set by this government, that government or the previous government, my ministry will investigate and prosecute if necessary. But there has been no evidence brought to my attention or to the attention of my officials to launch such an investigation.

The effluent discharges, as the member well knows, are well within the kinds of effluent levels allowed under the laws of Ontario. I as the minister, the lawmakers, the Ministry of Environment, can only react in terms of the laws we have in place at this time. As soon as evidence is brought forward to me, we will launch an investigation.

1420

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the Chair of Management Board regarding his programs of privatization. As you know, one third of the jobs at stake in the government mail and printing service are currently held by workers with disabilities, and some of these workers have been with the government for well over 30 years.

In reply to my question on May 5, you stated, "there's a...possibility that the taxpayers could be saved a tremendous amount of money by contracting this out with the private sector." Again, to the member for Nickel Belt: "In the estimation of the government, through this process several million dollars will be saved."

At a press conference this morning, David Baker, from ARCH, said you're engaging in a false economy because you'll ultimately be pushing these disabled workers into the ranks of the unemployed and on to welfare; you're being penny-wise and pound-foolish.

What amount of savings truly justifies ending the government's commitment to fair and equitable employment and putting the livelihoods of 40 disabled workers in jeopardy, perhaps ending up on welfare?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I want to first of all say that we value all the employees of the province of Ontario. Over the past year we've made a number of initiatives in terms of all the employees, in terms of early retirement plans, reassignments, and a good number of employees have been reassigned in the civil service.

Second, this very issue is before the Grievance Settlement Board — there were hearings last week; there are hearings coming up in the future — so it would be inappropriate for me to make any particular and specific comments about it, other than to say that we have a policy of reassigning, of benefits for employees, and a good number of employees have been able to take advantage of those programs.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary?

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): Minister, nowhere in your 90-page request for proposals have you set out provisions to protect workers with disabilities. You have completely ignored their requests to provide input to the process you are putting in place. You may say that your government cares about disabled workers,

but your actions speak louder than words. Your actions are undoing 30 years of government commitment to advancing the cause of persons with disabilities in our society. Until now, we have been proud to embrace the important contributions people like Bob Henderson have made. He has been a dedicated public servant for 33 years. What do you say to him?

In compassion and fairness, will you please do as you have been asked and withdraw the RFP until the full impact of its implications are understood?

Hon David Johnson: What I say to the member opposite is that there's a little bit of fearmongering going on here. Nobody has been laid off from the courier services, the mail services. There is a process under way. We have gone through a number of processes through the province of Ontario, and very few people have been laid off. Most people have been reassigned. Many people have been able to go with the job.

If the member opposite is indicating that the employees are not capable in this particular area, I have to say I disagree with him vehemently. All our employees are most capable, most valued, possibly will go with the new contract, possibly will be reassigned, any number of situations. Anything else is premature at this point and is simply fearmongering.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I'd like to follow up on that question by the members for Ottawa Centre and Carleton East on the privatization of the mail services. The minister responsible for Management Board is really engaging in a massive copout here. For you to say that it's before the Public Service Grievance Board has nothing to do with the issue at hand. If you want those people to be protected, the most vulnerable people in your employ, you need only put into those 90 pages of that request for proposals, into that RFP, a requirement that people with disabilities will be hired by the new employer. That's all you have to do.

Will you stand in your place now and say the RFP will be so amended?

Hon David Johnson: The fact of the matter is that the issue is before the Grievance Settlement Board at this point in time, and the fact of the matter is that not one employee has been laid off.

Yes, we are going through a process — two processes, I guess: the Grievance Settlement Board on the one hand, an RFP on the other. We've gone through many similar processes in Ontario.

There are probably fairly close to 12,000 fewer employees in the province today than there were in June 1995, but many of these people who would have been laid off have found reassignments within the civil service; many people have taken advantage of early retirement; many people have found the enhanced severance to be attractive; and many people have gone with the function to a new employer.

How this particular case will turn out is subject to the processes we're going through, but I have every confidence that the matter will be resolved satisfactorily.

Mr Laughren: In the first place, there's no need for it ever to be at the Public Service Grievance Board. It need not be there at all. You could have avoided that

completely by making it a requirement in the RFP that those people would be employed by a new private sector employer.

For you to say that some of the people with disabilities have been reassigned or taken new positions in the public service, I would remind you we're not talking about the public service any more, we're talking about the private sector, and the private sector has a different set of priorities, particularly since you scrapped the employment equity bill we brought in.

I would say to you that you're not playing straight with these people. I ask you, would you at least have the decency to look these people in the eye at a meeting and explain to them why you're doing what you're doing?

Hon David Johnson: It's pretty clear that this government is looking at restructuring. I'll say again that this government values all its employees and this government has shown it in many ways: through reassigning, and literally some 3,000 employees or so have been re-assigned —

Mr Laughren: To the private sector?

Hon David Johnson: No, within the civil service. Many other employees have found the reopening of the 80 factor, early retirement, to be very attractive and have taken that opportunity, have actually come forward and requested that. Many other people have asked for the ability to bridge to an early retirement, and that has happened.

There are many different situations involved. The Grievance Settlement Board is involved. For me to say anything beyond that would be totally inappropriate at this point.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, you and I had one of the most stimulating visits I've ever had in a secondary school in my riding yesterday when we were invited to Gordon Graydon Memorial Secondary School.

I know from your comments that you were as amazed as I was at the participation of those students. The subject before us was the issue of sexual assault. Frankly, I think we both felt that the level of understanding of this issue demonstrated by those students we met with was truly amazing.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The question, please.

Mrs Marland: Besides their awareness of the issue, we also recognized that they are students at a school that's at the leading edge of computer —

The Speaker: Thank you, member. Minister responsible for women's issues?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): The member for Mississauga South and I did visit Gordon Graydon secondary school yesterday and we were greeted by their student council president, Ahmed Habib. I have to tell members of the House that the level of understanding of technology in that school is just superb.

It's true across Ontario, but yesterday we had some assistance, as we launched the Ontario women's directorate Web site, from facilitators from the Peel Sexual Assault Committee, Allison Dantas and Sonya Singh, as we had this interaction with the students who seemed to know so much about the subject.

1430

It seems to all of us that as we use technology to get the message out that sexual harassment is such a huge negative in our society and especially in our schools, young people who can produce and assist the government with their Web site pages are people we should be proud of and thankful to, especially as we work together during Sexual Prevention Month.

Mrs Marland: I wish the members of the opposition party had the same opportunity that we did in terms of this particular visit, because had they involved these kinds of students across our province, previously when they were the government, we would be further into the use of this kind of technology.

I simply say to the minister that I'm very proud of the fact that our government has launched this new initiative in dealing with sexual assault. I'm particularly proud that it was launched at Gordon Graydon secondary school in my riding. We look forward to those students teaching us how to do the teaching in the classroom, because this is the generation, thankfully, that will solve the problems for future generations to come.

Obviously the use of computer resources is the only way we can get the message out to as many people as possible. Minister, do you feel optimistic now about the future of where we can go with this kind of technology in the secondary schools?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Of course, the answer is yes. Although Mr Beyer at Gordon Graydon and their teacher, Grant Wardlaw, showed exceptional leadership yesterday, on Monday, along with my colleague from Huron, we were at Central Huron district high school in Clinton, where we launched the CD-ROM — I'm sure the opposition members would be interested in this — which was an extension of the print material on *The Joke's Over*. *The Joke's Over* means it's not funny to sexually harass our friends, our neighbours and our colleagues.

I have to say that young people developed this CD-ROM for young people — Jason Bell, Rob Kemp, Erin Maaskant — under the supervision of their teacher, Stephen Oliver. The totally exceptional technology of this CD-ROM, where the first thing you see are two eyes on the ROM and eventually a little tear coming down the face and the music in the background, really sent the message about student-to-student sexual harassment. It isn't funny to sexually harass —

The Speaker: Thank you very much, Minister. New question.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It's now clear to everyone that what you've offered as a rent control bill is nothing short of rent decontrol. As a result, you've kissed affordable housing in Metro Toronto

goodbye. The people you're hurting the most are seniors, students and people living on fixed incomes. By taking controls off units as they become vacant, your bill will force people out on the street. Your legislation will throw the doors wide open to massive conversions of rental accommodation to condos, and rents, make no mistake about it, will go through the roof. Your bill is nothing short of a disaster.

Do you honestly care what you're doing with respect to these people in forcing them out on to the street? Do you care what happens to these people, Minister?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): This bill provides excellent protections for tenants and excellent opportunities for landlords to get back into providing more rental stock. Tenants are protected because rent control stays on and we maintain the same formula for rent control that currently exists, exactly the same formula. The increase this year will be 2.8%, which is the lowest in the history of rent control.

Giving the opportunity to eliminate rent controls on vacant units gives an opportunity for both the landlord and the tenant to negotiate a new rent, and then the rent control comes back on, so tenants are protected and landlords have more opportunity. It's a very balanced bill and I think it will be received by everyone as good news.

Mr Cordiano: The minister's answer confirms what everyone by now already knows, that you have a serious listening problem when it comes to the people of Metro Toronto. Your reputation is becoming legendary; there's no other way to describe it. The fact is, you're not listening to the people who are going to be affected by these massive increases. You know 25% of tenants move each year, so by next year more than half a million tenants will be left with no protection whatsoever. There will be fewer rental units and they will be more expensive. It's going to leave a lot of people with no place to live.

You are about to create another crisis in affordable housing, with dire economic consequences. Why aren't you listening to people when they're trying to warn you? Why aren't you listening to tenants right across this city who are warning you that you're going to create a huge crisis in affordable housing?

Hon Mr Leach: We did listen. We put the draft legislation out to hearings all of last summer. We received hundreds of proposals. We've adjusted the bill. Once it has second reading it will go back out for further input, and I'm sure during that process there will be further amendments. It is a very balanced piece of legislation that protects both the tenant and the landlord.

If the Liberals really want to talk about skyrocketing increases, they should look back to 1988 when rents were jumping by 30%, 40%, 50% and even 100% as a result of the legislation you had in at that time. What we have is a very balanced piece of legislation that helps the tenant and helps the landlord.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a question to the Solicitor General. This morning you held yet another one of your boot camp conferences. You

showed off the new uniforms you're going to put on your young offenders that are going to make them look like department store security guards, complete with little military-style epaulettes. You announced the privatization contract that's going to pay \$2.4 million a year to a company whose only experience has been a one-year stint running a Florida boot camp.

We heard that this company's going to be hiring drill instructors and that the young offenders are going to be put to work mopping floors and cleaning roadsides. But what we haven't heard is how this is going to do any good when this government is doing nothing to deal with the dramatic and enormous rate of youth unemployment, when those young people in your boot camp are going to get no serious job training in their four- to six-month stay. What are their chances of getting jobs in the real world mopping floors or cleaning roadsides when they are eventually released?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Certainly the intent behind the establishment of a strict discipline program for young offenders is to try, as the name of the program indicates, to turn around young people's lives, people who are repeat offenders coming into the justice system for the second, third or fourth time. The current system is not helping these people, it's not helping society.

Over 60% of people in the young offenders correction system are repeat offenders. Over 80% of the offenders in the adult system are graduates of the youth justice system. That's not a very satisfactory statistic; none of us is happy with it. We have to try new methods, new initiatives, new ways of turning these young lives around so that they can become productive members of society.

Mr Kormos: This government sends its backbenchers on a New York City junket to rely on New York City policing as some sort of model for Ontario, and now it incorporates the failed US experiment with boot camps as a response to young offenders. You should know that the headline of one recent Wall Street Journal article said, "Shock Camps, Failing to Cure Recidivism, Get the Boot." It explains how boot camps have been quietly closed down in the United States when it turned out that recidivism rates were as high, indeed higher than ever, up around 70% for your so-called boot camp graduates.

1440

No wonder the folks from Florida were so eager to get your \$2.4-million-a-year contract here in Ontario, where you're still hooked on this obsolete and ineffective approach of boot camps. One criminologist from Maryland said that boot camps were simply producing healthy, disciplined young criminals. When are you and your government going to get around to dealing with the real problem among youth, and that's the incredibly —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for Welland-Thorold. Solicitor General.

Hon Mr Runciman: I think one of the messages we received during the last election was that people were fed up with the old approaches: knocking police, coddling criminals and ignoring victims. That's the track record of the provincial government for the past 10 years. We suffered 10 years of actual mismanagement of the criminal justice file in this province and we're doing some-

thing about it. We have the support of the people of this province for what we're doing.

With respect to the boot camp concept, we have indicated through our task force process that we did not accept the so-called boot camp concept. This is a version of it, but certainly one that's going to have an impact in all areas of young offenders' lives in terms of not only instilling discipline and structure to their lives, many of whom have not had an opportunity to —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRES

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. In the May 6 budget our government demonstrated once again our commitment to turning Ontario's economy around to provide jobs and opportunity in the province. Our government reiterates our commitment to reduce the size of government, red tape and unnecessary regulations that discourage the creation and expansion of business.

Our government has a record of fiscal responsibility leading to more business and consumer confidence and therefore more jobs, as we speak. I spoke about that today, the good news happening in Scarborough.

Minister, in light of the fact that small business creates more jobs than any other sector in Ontario, can you please give this House and my constituents in the riding of Scarborough Centre an update on new government initiatives that are being developed to assist small business growth in Scarborough Centre and across Ontario.

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'd like to say right off the bat that this government is very supportive of small business. There's no doubt about that. There was a new three-year plan announced for small business enterprise centres to be created in the near future. These new centres really are the result of the private and public sectors getting together to decide how best to help small business.

As you know, there are currently 32 self-help centres, and these self-help centres in 1996 alone had some 250,000 inquiries, 12,000 business plan consultations and actually held 450 business seminars. From this activity, 12,000 new jobs have been created and 4,000 new businesses were started in 1996.

Mr Newman: Thank you, Minister. Every initiative that contributes to an environment that introduces business and job growth is always welcome news in my riding of Scarborough Centre. Indeed, expertise to keep Ontario's small business at the leading edge to keep up with growing competition from other provinces and countries is one of the best supports this government can offer.

Can you tell us if the sites for the enterprise centres have been selected yet and what the prime locations are?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'm happy to say there are five potential sites already identified: Hamilton, London, Sudbury, Brampton and Ottawa. These enterprise centres, as you know, came from the new budget initiatives. We want to expand current programs. We're not satisfied

with what's been done to date. This is a direct government response to concerns of local entrepreneurs. They've asked us to help them establish more small business.

The result of all of these changes will be stronger, better-managed small businesses, faster growth, and more jobs will be created. I want to emphasize that these centres will be self-sufficient after three years of operation —

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): The centre was opened three years ago.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Hamilton East, I've warned you twice. I'm not going to warn you again. You are out of order. I'm going to name you next time. Are you finished, Minister?

Hon Mr Saunderson: These centres will be self-supporting after three years. That means the government will no longer be involved in this. Thank you.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This afternoon I sent some pictures over to you as an example of the damage done by recent flooding in Essex county in particular. It's been over a month now since the municipality of Mersea township asked that the Shoreline Property Assistance Act loan program be reinstated at the earliest possible date. This has been supported by the town of Belle River as well as the county of Essex. Minister, are you prepared to provide funding to that act, and if so, when?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member of the official opposition for sending over the pictures. They are very descriptive of the damage that's been done there, and I think everybody has a great deal of sympathy for the people who are involved. As the member knows, there is no funding in that program at the present time. The funding was eliminated by the Liberal government back in 1988.

I am working with my staff to see what the alternatives are. We haven't reached any conclusion or any decisions at this point in time. As quickly as we do, we will relate that back to the municipalities involved.

Mr Crozier: That's the same answer you gave over two weeks ago. All I'm saying is that notwithstanding the fact that there isn't any funding, it's your prerogative to put money there, and it's a loan, after all. You're going to make interest on it, for crying out loud. If you're so efficient and your ministry is so efficient and your ministry is so concerned, why is it taking you so damn long to make up your mind?

Hon Mr Leach: As the member knows, the damage down there was considerable and it's a very complex issue. We want to have a good understanding of what the effects are, what money is involved, what the options are for government to try and provide some assistance. It would have been much easier if the funding for the program hadn't been cancelled by the Liberal Party. However, as I told the member before, we have it under investigation. As soon as I have something to report back to him I will advise the municipalities affected and also the local member.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Labour. For two years now you've been promising injured workers that eventually they will have a chance to speak out against your government's destructive WCB reforms. Bill 99 is a complete 106-page rewrite of the Workers' Compensation Act, and on every page of that bill, Minister, we see taking away rights and benefits of injured workers; in fact, a total of \$15 billion out of the pockets of injured workers.

You promised extensive public hearings. Hundreds of individuals and groups, as you know, have already indicated their interest in appearing before the committee. Now we learn that through your time allocation motion you intend to shut down debate and severely limit the hearing times. In fact, the public hearing schedule will only allow 10 hours of hearings here in Toronto and then a further six days in Toronto or across the province, hardly any time to allow people who want to express their opposition to what you're doing, hardly time to do that adequately.

My question to you is simply this: Why not allow enough time? Why not live up to your word and allow enough time in the public hearings for people to express to you their very sincere and severe concerns about what you're doing to workers' compensation in the province?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I think it's important to understand that this government has been listening and responding to the needs of workers' compensation reform now for many years. In fact we started the process as early as 1990. As you know, your government attempted to reform workers' comp and we're simply completing the process.

1450

We felt that workers' comp reform was so important, and we gave Mr Jackson the responsibility. During the time that he had responsibility for workers' comp he met with over 150 groups, and many of those were injured workers. He travelled throughout the province listening to injured workers. He received more than 200 submissions.

We are at a point now where we want to move the legislation forward and we want to make sure we have the opportunity to listen to people in Toronto and throughout the wider province. We want to introduce the reform in order that we can focus, first and foremost —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr Silipo: Minister, I don't know who you're listening to. It certainly is not the injured workers, because in instance after instance their concerns have not been reflected, certainly not in the work that Mr Jackson did, certainly not in the legislation that's before us and certainly not in the way in which you are now going in wanting to shut down debate very severely and limit the ability of injured workers to tell you and to tell the standing committee directly how opposed they are to what you are doing.

This is not just tinkering with the legislation; this is a major overhaul of the system. It's a major change that should warrant adequate time in committee for it to be debated and discussed. In fact even last year when you dealt with Bill 49 — remember the bill that you called

“minor housekeeping” — there was more time allowed for hearings on that bill than you are allowing on workers' compensation.

Again, Minister, I ask you: Why are you not allowing adequate time for people who are opposed to what you are doing on workers' compensation to come forward and to state their case in front of the committee? Since you haven't listened to them so far, will you not listen to them at this stage of the game?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just remind you, we have been listening and we have been responding to the need for workers' compensation reform since the early 1990s. In fact, it was a key part of our platform in the election.

Now we have made a commitment, not only to injured workers but to people throughout this province, that we want to change the focus at the WCB. We want to make sure we don't have the number of injured workers that we have at the present time. We have changed our focus from compensation to the prevention of injury and illness in the workplace. We want to make sure we can bring forward that legislation and that's where we can focus.

We are restructuring the WCB in order that service can be provided to injured workers in a more timely and efficient manner than in the past. I think the discussion has gone on now for years and years — it actually started in 1984 — and it's time that we have public hearings, starting in June, throughout the summer, and then we can introduce the new policy.

VISITORS

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I rise on a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: In my riding of Sarnia, which is 300 kilometres away from here, there is a school called Cathcart Boulevard public school. This school has some of the finest teachers and finest students. It is my privilege to tell you that students, teachers and principals are here today, about 100, on both sides of the gallery.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Welcome.

Mr Boushy: It's worth it.

The Speaker: I am sure it is worth it to you and them. I'm not sure what the member for Scarborough West is going to say.

QUESTION PERIOD

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I infrequently complain about decisions of the Chair, but under standing order 33(a), I simply want to express a concern with respect to when members of the executive council are asked a question and a number of allegations are raised during that question. Then when a minister stands to respond, heckling arises in the opposition benches and very significantly limits the opportunity of a member of government to respond to those very serious allegations. I would hope that consideration could be given to ensuring that there is an opportunity to adequately respond.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I understand about this heckling business. If it does get too loud, I try to jump up and allow an opportunity for the House to calm down. I understand you were answering the question

and you feel the heckling was loud. I guess what I'm saying to you is that it wasn't as bad as it could have been for me to stand. I appreciate your point of privilege, but I find it without foundation.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have to say that as a member who has a question, all the heckling that is taking place in the House, the interference during question period has curtailed the time to ask questions in the House. I really don't know if, in that case, it should be allowed to present people — who are, yes, welcome here in our House — while we have question period going on.

The Speaker: I think I agree with you and I don't agree with you in some instances. Your point is well taken. I will follow it up closely.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature to it.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr Peter North (Elgin): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission appointed by the health minister has recommended closure of the London and St Thomas psychiatric hospitals; and

"Whereas psychiatric patients are being displaced without adequate support systems; and

"Whereas article 34(1) of the Mental Health Act states, 'A patient shall be discharged from a psychiatric facility when he is no longer in need of the observation, care and treatment provided therein'; and

"Whereas article 34(2) of the Mental Health Act states, 'Subsection (1) does not authorize the discharge into the community of a patient who is subject to detention otherwise under this act';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to retain psychiatric facilities separate from schedule 1 hospitals and managed by the Ministry of

Health to ensure that no person will go untreated or will be placed at risk or cause another to be placed at risk."

I sign my name to this.

RESTRUCTURATION DES MUNICIPALITÉS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : «À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que le gouvernement de l'Ontario se propose de changer entièrement la structure de relations entre la province et les municipalités sans avoir consulté la population de l'Ontario ; et

«Que cette restructuration propose de transférer aux municipalité le coût des services de transport et des services sociaux essentiels tels que l'aide sociale et les soins de longue durée à l'intention des personnes âgées et des personnes atteintes d'une maladie chronique ; et

«Enlève aux conseils scolaires leur habilité à lever des impôts, éliminant ainsi tout pouvoir de contrôle réel sur les écoles et les programmes scolaires ; et

«Que par ces mesures le gouvernement manque à son engagement de garantir les niveaux de financement actuels et ne reconnaît pas que les diverses collectivités locales n'ont pas les mêmes moyens de faire face à ces nouveaux fardeaux, créant ainsi une inégalité d'accès aux services essentiels ; et

«Considérant que le gouvernement ne manifeste pas l'intérêt pour une consultation réelle du public, qu'il ne prend pas en compte les réactions du public et qu'il constitue ainsi une grave menace pour la démocratie ;

«Nous, les soussignés résidents et résidentes de l'Ontario, parce que nous nous soucions de la qualité de vie dans notre province et du bien-être de nos enfants, de nos voisins, de nos voisines et de nos communautés, déposons par la présente un vote de non-confiance à l'endroit du gouvernement de la province de l'Ontario.»

1500

TAXATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): "Whereas the Conservative Party has broken its promise that it would not close hospitals in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party said it would not introduce user fees and proceeded to introduce \$225 million in new user fees for seniors through the Ontario drug benefit plan; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that aid for the disabled would not be cut and proceeded to level millions of dollars in new user fees on to the backs of the disabled; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that there would be no cuts to education and then proceeded to impose cuts which caused the cancellation of JK classes, the cancellation of special education programs, and created larger classroom sizes; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party stated that there would be no cuts to law enforcement and then cut the budgets of Ontario's police and courts by more than \$100 million; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that there would be no cuts to the environment and has broken this promise by firing environmental inspectors and cutting

the budget which protects the environment by over \$100 million;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative Party to cancel the last stage of its tax scheme, which benefits the wealthiest people in Ontario the most, and restore funding for programs which protect health care, education, seniors and the environment."

I've affixed my signature in full agreement with the sentiments.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas summer employment is a necessity to many students to help finance their post-secondary education; and

"Whereas obtaining summer employment may mean the difference between students returning or not returning to school; and

"Whereas summer employment provides work experience necessary for students to compete in the job market after leaving school; and

"Whereas summer employment is a means through which students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds can compete with students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds for education; and

"Whereas summer employment is more productive for students than unemployment; and

"Whereas after threat of elimination, Ontario student jobs programs were drastically scaled down last year;

"We, the people undersigned, demand the Ontario government continue all existing Ontario student jobs programs and invest in expanding and establishing new student and youth employment programs."

In support, I affix my signature.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000;

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services," and I may add, contrary to what was written in the Common Sense Revolution, the right-wing document campaigned on;

"Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas" and did fund \$25 million to areas other than the Windsor-Essex county area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Minister of Health to provide the appropriate level of funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west end community and to restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county."

These are just more in a very long list of petitions on this issue, and I sign.

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It reads:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology; and

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer services; and

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres; and

"Since the Niagara hospital restructuring committee used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommendations and was forced to take into account a cut of \$44 million in funding for Niagara hospitals when carrying out its study; and

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature as I am in full agreement with this petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have petitions signed here by residents of Windsor, Kingsville, Essex, Leamington, all over Essex county and Windsor. It's addressed as:

"A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000; and

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures by 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services; and

"Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Minister of Health to provide the appropriate level of funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west end community and to restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county."

In support of this I affix my signature.

TAXATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): "Whereas the Conservative Party has broken its promise that it would not close hospitals in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party said that it would not introduce user fees and proceeded to introduce \$225 million in new user fees for seniors through the Ontario drug benefit plan; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that aid for the disabled would not be cut and proceeded to level millions of dollars in new user fees on to the backs of the disabled; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised there would be no cuts to education and then proceeded to impose cuts which caused the cancellation of JK classes, the cancellation of special education programs, and created larger classroom sizes; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party stated that there would be no cuts to law enforcement and then cut the budgets of Ontario police and courts by more than \$100 million; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that there would not be cuts to the environment and has broken this promise by firing environmental inspectors and cutting the budget which protects the environment by over \$1 million;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative Party to cancel the last stage of its tax scheme which benefits the wealthiest people in Ontario the most and restore funding for the programs which protect health care, education, seniors and the environment."

I affix my signature to this and I am in full agreement with this.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Madam Speaker, you will see the pile of petitions that this issue resulted in.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the citizens of Windsor and surrounding areas feel we should have the right in the decision to

close Windsor Regional Hospital western campus emergency unit, it is unfair that this decision was made without public consent or insight. As of April 1997 the emergency unit is closed, leaving thousands of citizens without medical care in this area.

"We, the residents of Windsor and surrounding areas, think this is unfair and we oppose the closing of Windsor Regional Hospital western campus emergency unit."

I'm very pleased to submit 4,000 names to that effect.

TVONTARIO

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I have a petition I've received from an individual in Ottawa who has expressed the inability to get it done through his member opposite and has asked me to introduce this petition dealing with the need to privatize TVOntario. I'm pleased to append my signature.

1510

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is to the government of Ontario:

"Whereas non-instructional staff of boards of education provide an important and essential service to schools in Ontario;

"Whereas the school system functions best, in the interest of its students, when all of its employees work in harmony and coordination and with the kind of expertise that comes with continuity, coordination and experience;

"Whereas Bill 104 encourages the privatization and outsourcing of non-instructional positions and the resulting loss of jobs, cutting of wages and salaries, and removal of employment benefits for people with comparatively moderate incomes;

"Whereas dedicated educational employees are having their lives severely disrupted so that the Conservative government of Mike Harris can finance an income tax that benefits the wealthiest people the most;

"We, the undersigned, request that Bill 104 be rescinded by the Conservative government and any future legislation not call for the outsourcing and privatization of educational jobs."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

SPECIAL-NEEDS PRESCHOOL

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): This is a petition from some 2,200 people in the counties of Elgin, Middlesex, Lambton and Kent. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly for funding to continue a preschool for special-needs children two to six years of age in the area of Wardsville to accommodate the surrounding areas of west Middlesex, west Elgin, east Lambton and east Kent."

This petition is for the children with special needs who have no services at the end of June 1997. I affix my name to it.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHINESE CULTURAL CENTRE OF GREATER TORONTO FOUNDATION ACT, 1997

Mr Curling moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr81, An Act respecting the Chinese Cultural
Centre of Greater Toronto Foundation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the
pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF NIAGARA FALLS ACT, 1997

Mr Maves moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr80, An Act respecting the Young Women's
Christian Association of Niagara Falls.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House
that the motion carry? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I move
government notice of motion number 20:

That pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding
any other standing order or special order of the House
relating to Bill 99, An Act to secure the financial stability
of the compensation system for injured workers, to
promote the prevention of injury and disease in Ontario
workplaces and to revise the Workers' Compensation Act
and make related amendments to other Acts, when Bill 99
is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall
put every question necessary to dispose of the second
reading stage of the bill without further debate or amend-
ment, and at such time the bill shall be referred to the
standing committee on resources development;

That the standing committee on resources development
shall be authorized to meet to consider the bill at its
regularly scheduled meeting times during the weeks of
June 16 and 23;

That the standing committee further be authorized to
meet to consider the bill for six days during the summer
recess;

That all amendments be tabled with the clerk of the
committee by 5 pm seven calendar days following the
final day of consideration during the summer recess;

That the committee be authorized to meet to consider
the bill for four days of clause-by-clause during its
regularly scheduled sessional meeting times; and that the
committee be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour
of adjournment on the fourth day until completion of
clause-by-clause consideration;

At 5 pm on the fourth day of clause-by-clause delibera-
tions, those amendments which have not yet been moved
shall be deemed to have been moved and the Chair of the
committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall,
without further debate or amendment, put every question

necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill
and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall
be deferred until all remaining questions have been put
and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting
period allowed pursuant to standing order 128(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House
no later than the first sessional day that reports from
committees may be received following the commence-
ment of the fourth day of clause-by-clause consideration
or no later than the first sessional day in November,
whichever is earliest. In the event that the committee fails
to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be
deemed passed by the committee and shall be deemed to
be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing commit-
tee on resources development, the Speaker shall put the
question for adoption of the report forthwith, which ques-
tion shall be decided without debate or amendment and
at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That one sessional day shall be allotted to the third
reading stage of the bill. At 5:45 pm on such day, the
Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put
every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the
bill without further debate or amendment;

That in the case of any division relating to any pro-
ceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to
five minutes and no deferral of any division pursuant to
standing order 28(g) shall be permitted.

Madam Speaker, I believe unanimous consent has been
received that after I speak the time will be divided
equally between the two opposition parties until 6
o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is there
unanimous consent to split the time evenly between the
two opposition parties? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Today I would like to outline in
very clear terms why the government is going to move
forward in order that we can begin the committee stage
of legislative proceedings for Bill 99, the Workplace
Safety and Insurance Act.

As I indicated earlier in the afternoon, this government
and governments before have been listening and respond-
ing to the need for workers' compensation reform for a
very long time. In fact, the reform to WCB actually
started in 1984. It continued under the Liberal govern-
ment and under the NDP. Most recently, we introduced
Bill 15, which continued that reform.

When we were in opposition and I was labour critic
between 1990 and 1995, we consulted with individual
stakeholders around the province. We were able to deter-
mine what was wrong with the system. We then contin-
ued to consult with individuals. We made the reform
of WCB a key issue in our election campaign because we
were determined to secure benefits for injured workers
into the future. To do that, we have to make sure we
restore the financial integrity of the WCB.

At the present time, we have an unfunded liability of
\$10.4 billion. That is three times the unfunded liability of
all the other provinces combined. Our objective is to
eliminate that unfunded liability by the year 2014. If we
are able to do that, we are able to secure benefits into the
future for injured workers.

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Also, by introducing Bill 99, we are changing the focus of the WCB. The focus will no longer be on compensation. The focus will be on making sure we look at prevention of injury and illness in the first place. In that way, we won't have the thousands and thousands of injured workers that we have today.

Getting back to the consultation that has taken place, as I indicated to you, really the changes started in 1984. It continued when we were in opposition. It continued with my colleague the Honourable Cam Jackson, the former minister responsible for workers' compensation reform. Mr Jackson consulted with over 150 individual injured workers in 1995 and 1996. He travelled to such communities as Thunder Bay, Niagara Falls, Simcoe, Nepean, St Catharines, Guelph, Woodstock, Burlington, Kitchener-Waterloo and Ottawa. As well as meeting with so many individuals and groups, Mr Jackson received over 200 written submissions providing considerable advice and input on reform initiatives.

After Mr Jackson completed his consultations, we continued to consult and we continued to meet with a variety of stakeholders on the New Directions recommendations that were prepared by Mr Jackson. As a direct result of that consultation, we heard during that time that we needed to take a look at some of the proposals that had been put forward. Again, those consultations included injured workers; they included employees; they included employers.

We have made some changes as a result of the input we received. For example, we made changes in the definition of "accident." We decided, after listening to the injured workers, that we would not add a three-day waiting period. We also responded to the employee groups and the employer groups who expressed concern about a direct-pay model of insurance and decided that we would not proceed with that initiative. So we have been listening. We have been listening not only in opposition, but for the past two years while in government. We believe it is now necessary to move on to committee in order to complete the final overhaul of the Workers' Compensation Board, and that is where we are going to be moving.

I want to take this opportunity to remind the members of this House of some of the previous efforts of governments to reform the workers' compensation system and how, comparatively speaking, we believe our time allocation motion is an acceptable way to move Bill 99 through the legislative process.

It's important to know that the NDP government introduced their Bill 165 and it eliminated \$18 billion of the unfunded liability as a result of the introduction of the Friedland formula of inflation indexation. This was probably the most significant change introduced by the NDP, and it certainly went a long way in starting to eliminate the unfunded liability.

We build on the reform that was started by the NDP. In our Bill 99 we modify the Friedland formula further in order that we can eliminate an additional \$9.3 billion against the unfunded liability by the year 2014. However, in further modifying the Friedland formula, we are continuing to fully protect those who are the most

vulnerable, that is, the 100% disabled and the survivors of deceased injured workers.

In our motion, we allow committee debate on Bill 99 to take place at different times over a six-week period. This is very comparable to the previous government's WCB legislation, despite the less significant impact on inflation indexation from our reforms.

I want to remind people in this House that when the NDP government was dealing with Bill 165, which was introduced in 1994, this bill, which was considered to be very significant because of the amount of money that was eliminated from the pockets of injured workers, only received one day at second reading. At 10 hours, our Bill 99 has already had four times the number of days at second reading as the previous government's legislation.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Oh, come on. Our bill was out there for so long. What a stretch.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, come to order.

Hon Mrs Witmer: This time allocation motion today will also give the opposition one day for third reading. I need to remind the previous government that they felt one day for third reading was quite satisfactory, because they allocated the same time for their Bill 165. We have already, at this second reading stage, given the opposition parties four times the number of days at second reading as the previous government, who only allocated one day for second reading and one day for third reading.

There is something else I need to mention about the previous government's record on workers' compensation reform. During the second reading debate on Bill 99, I know the members of the third party were claiming that their Bill 165 was the result of a compromise agreement resulting from former Premier Rae's Labour-Management Advisory Committee. They also indicated that their government had the full support of a variety of organizations involved in the workers' compensation system.

It needs to be said and put on the record that there was absolutely no such consensus. There was not a compromise agreement from the Labour-Management Advisory Committee. Although the process had been set up by Premier Rae, it was not followed through, and at the end of the day the Premier and his party proceeded to unilaterally enact the reforms which they believed were necessary and not the ones that had been agreed to by the labour-management committee. If you take the time to review the committee proceedings from that period, you will see this important fact for yourself, so I think it's somewhat unfair to indicate that Bill 165 had the support of both labour and management. It simply did not.

It's also important to note that throughout the time the opposition has been dealing with WCB reform, they have endorsed many, if not all, of the proposed legislative changes to the workers' compensation system that we are indicating are necessary today if we are going to eliminate the unfunded liability and ensure benefits for injured workers into the future.

I now want to provide an outline of why we believe it is time to move this bill through the legislative process. As I indicated, this is the final step in the overhaul of the WCB. It's interesting that Premier Rae said on April 14, 1994: "It has been apparent for some time now that the

workers' compensation system is in critical need of reform and renewal. All across North America, governments are grappling with the need to make their systems of workers' compensation more viable, efficient and affordable."

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He went on to say, "In Ontario, workers have become increasingly critical of the impact of earlier legislation and of the difficulty of getting back to work." That difficulty of getting back to work is still there today, and that is part of what our legislation is going to change, because our legislation will encourage and support the timely and safe return to work of injured workers.

Premier Rae went on to say, "Employers worry that their costs may have to rise beyond what they can afford in the future because of present and future liabilities," and of course that situation still exists today. As I indicated earlier, our unfunded liability is three times the size of all the other unfunded liabilities combined. There's also a concern for employers, because every time they hire a new employee, they assume \$4,000 of the unfunded liability. There is a real disincentive to job creation.

Premier Rae went on to say, speaking about his changes, "These are the first vital steps towards designing a compensation system that will serve the workers of Ontario into the next century." That's what is extremely important, because Mr Rae recognized that those were important first steps, and we are now completing the overhaul. As we all know, this legislation has not been rewritten since 1914. The language is out of date, we are dealing with the changing workplace, we are changing the employer-employee relationship, so we have now rewritten the act entirely. It is now time to get out, receive the final input and advice during public hearings, and then we will have the opportunity to make those important changes to workers' compensation which are long overdue.

Our reforms will restore the financial viability of the board by eliminating the \$10.4-billion unfunded liability by the year 2014. We are also keeping our commitment to adjust benefit levels from the current 90% of pre-injury net earnings to 85%. Similar adjustments have already been made in New Brunswick, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia; in fact, our benefits will still be among the most generous in Canada, because some of those provinces start out at 75% or 80%, and we are reducing our levels to 85%. As I indicated earlier, we are going to make some changes as well to inflation protection for all but the most vulnerable workers.

In order to ensure balance and in order to ensure that all employers pay their fair share of the system, we are taking steps on the revenue side. We know that under the current system there are some companies that move into this province temporarily and then leave with outstanding WCB premiums. We know there are other employers who, in order to avoid outstanding WCB debts, reorganize their businesses. Under our reforms, the board will be able to take direct action to halt this revenue leakage. We want to make sure the honest employers do not continue to subsidize those who are dishonest.

I also want to comment at this time about a remark that was made by the third party during second reading debate. They indicated that the unfunded liability had declined over the last two years as a direct result of their Bill 165. Perhaps these members would say that this development dampens the need to enact Bill 99 and that this time allocation motion is unnecessary. I think it's important that the members of the third party know that the total net effect of Bill 165 was to reduce the projected unfunded liability from the \$30 billion to \$12 billion by the year 2014, but it was never projected to eliminate it. The total net financial impact of this change was immediately implemented in the 1994 operating results of the Workers' Compensation Board, and it has had absolutely no further effect on the unfunded liability. To say anything else is inaccurate.

The unfunded liability has declined since our government took office, but it's not because of Bill 165. The main reasons for the change are the better-than-expected return on the investment fund and the fact that there are more assessment rate revenues from the employers, because as a result of some of the initiatives of our government and other changes, we now have more workers employed and covered by the workers' compensation system. It's not Bill 165 that has had the impact; the impact is the expected greater rate of return on the investment fund and the fact that there are more people working, and as a result we have more assessment revenue than had been anticipated.

We need to be cognizant that if that's the reason for the situation at the board, this situation could just as quickly reverse itself and deteriorate. Thus, our reforms are imperative, because they are going to provide real, sustained reform to eliminate the unfunded liability once and for all.

A second reason to move this bill through the legislative process is to enact changes to ensure that injured workers return to work in a safe and timely manner. We all know that we have been doing a poor job in this province of getting injured workers back to work safely and in a timely manner. In fact, the board in past years has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on vocational rehabilitation, and unfortunately we have very little to show for it.

Our reforms will place new responsibilities on the employers and the employees in order that they maintain a very close contact with each other and that there is an opportunity to arrange suitable pre-injury employment and also that they are encouraged to cooperate in any return-to-work measures required by the board. That is very important. If we're ever going to get injured workers back to work in a safe and timely manner, there is going to be a need for communication and cooperation between employers and employees. We need to maintain that workplace connection. Our reform is intended to do exactly that. Our reforms would also provide for the development of labour market re-entry plans where return to work happens to be more difficult.

A third reason we need to move Bill 99 to committee is to ensure that the changes that are made restore the workers' compensation system to its original mandate as a workplace accident insurance plan. In past years,

compensation has been paid for conditions whose connection to the workplace is often difficult to determine, so we must refocus the system. We must modernize the act, which was originally written in 1914 and has been amended over 50 times since then. We also need to restructure the five agencies related to the board in order that more efficient and effective service can be provided to injured workers and employers.

Finally, we need to introduce this motion now, because we need to move to committee so that the government has the opportunity of hearing directly from the people about our goal of making the workplaces in this province among the safest in the world.

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Bill 99 is going to give the WCB the responsibility for the prevention of injury and illness. It will enable the board to work cooperatively with the Ministry of Labour and the other partners in health and safety to develop a new, coordinated vision and strategy for health and safety. We need to get on with the job of preventing illness and injury in the workplace.

Just before I conclude, as the members know, the Workers' Compensation Board has committed to making the functional abilities form and chronic pain regulation available for committee hearings. I'm pleased to advise the members of this House that this material will be ready. Again, the board is going to be looking for input on the functional abilities form and the chronic pain legislation. We look forward to the public comment on those two initiatives.

In closing, in bringing forward this time allocation motion the government is simply outlining in very clear terms our process for additional public consultation on reform. It's unfortunate that we haven't had agreement on this issue over the last several months and that we do need to outline these specific details. I guess I need to remind members opposite that the previous two governments used time allocation motions on a regular basis. The NDP government actually used these motions 23 times during their term, and they are in fact the author of the time allocation standing order which we are using today.

I look forward to the 13 days of public debate that will take place on this legislation, not only in the city of Toronto but in towns and cities across Ontario. This consultation is important, and it is going to allow us to proceed and complete the overhaul of the workers' compensation system in order that we can start to focus first and foremost on prevention of injury and illness and ensure that in this province we have among the safest workplaces in the world.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm always interested in the government excuse for proposing time allocation motions. They're better known as "the guillotine" or "closure motions," although we use the term "time allocation." That usually means the government is annoyed that there is some considerable debate taking place over a piece of legislation and wants to restrict that debate so that the public is not as aware as it should be of all the issues which are or could be raised during that debate.

This is a very significant piece of legislation. That is something all three parties would agree upon. In fact, when you have such an extensive overhaul, as the minister would call it, of the Workers' Compensation Board legislation, you know you are going to be affecting thousands upon thousands of people in Ontario, usually the most vulnerable people in our society, those who are unfortunate enough to be hurt on the job. Often, because of the nature of the job, it is those who are in lines of work that require a lot of physical exertion. That's ordinarily where you find the majority of the accidents.

Many of those people, as the result of an injury, are not able to walk into a law office or a doctor's office or a classroom and start a profession or a new work endeavour. That is why they're very reliant upon the compensation that is paid through the auspices of the Workers' Compensation Board.

The government, members of the House should know, the public should know, particularly those who are watching, has every intention of bringing in new rules to this House. The reason they're going to do that is that even with the very restrictive rules we have on the opposition now, as demonstrated by the imposition of a time allocation motion this afternoon, the government is still not satisfied.

Those who are the Reform right-wingers in the government and find this House cumbersome and find democracy a nuisance will want to see the rules changed even further so that the opportunity for the opposition to debate legislation and, when it is justified, to delay the processing of legislation so that public attention can be focused on it — when that happens, there are some in the government who are unhappy. They're mostly the more recent members of the Legislature, because those who have sat on the opposition side know that in a democracy the opposition plays a very significant role. We do not have the power, ordinarily, to initiate legislation, particularly legislation which would include the raising of public funds and the expenditure of public funds, but we do have the opportunity to deal with legislation, to offer constructive criticism and to offer alternatives. But also it is our responsibility to bring to the attention of the public the issues surrounding matters of this kind.

We believe the time allocation is unduly restrictive on that debate. We believe that further debate would be useful in canvassing the issues and in sharing the importance of those issues with the public who watch through the auspices of the legislative television channel or through the coverage which is given by the members of the news media who are filling the public galleries right now. As members will see, the galleries are full of the news media, who are very interested in this subject and everything going on in this House. We know that is something that will happen. There will be that adequate coverage.

The member for Perth — this is a little bit of a diversion — was kind enough to report to me that Conrad Black, the media Mongol —

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): My constituent.

Mr Bradley: — a constituent of the member for York Mills, the friend of the government of Ontario who now owns at least 58 out of 104 daily newspapers in this country, did not in fact buy the London Free Press.

Rather, Sun Media completed its purchase. We know, then, that with Sun Media everything will be very, very well balanced in terms of the coverage, having watched the Sun in Toronto, Ottawa and other places.

Of course now that the teachers' pension plan has some funds in the Sun, I expect that OSSTF and others will be exercising their prerogative to moderate the viewpoints that are expressed by the Sun newspapers across this country. If there are any teachers in the gallery today, I would hope they would be imploring their federation to exercise that power to perhaps influence the Sun to be the kind of balanced newspaper we're looking for it to be in all the communities in which it is found, because we know that Conrad Black is the friend of the government. He believes in the right-wing agenda this government is bringing forward, and he's prepared to say so.

If you look at the changes that are made in the newspapers now owned by Conrad Black, you will see that they're bringing in right-wing ideologues to write many of the editorials. They are intimidating, in my view, many of the reporters who used to be looking for good investigative stories out there. Some of them with a left- rather than a right-wing bent are now intimidated in so many circumstances. So "the right-wing press" is now a good description of it with Conrad Black owning it. But that doesn't relate as much to this motion this afternoon as I would like it to.

I want to put this piece of legislation in context. Probably a significant number of working people in this province, unionized employees in this province, voted for the government last election. Heaven forbid, they would not have been elected without that kind of support. When they heard those slogans of, "You know, those welfare people out there, they are ripping you off," and the hot-button message was out there to people: "It's time we kicked those people, because they are a problem for our society," or "We don't like employment equity, do we?" — employment equity that might give others in our society more of a chance to be able to be involved in the process of employment and other areas.

With those hot-button issues, with those emotional, catchy, negative issues, the government was able to garner some significant support, even from areas where people might not understand it would come normally.

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Those who are working people today will see what the real agenda of this government and of right-wing governments is. It reminds me of what I saw in the newspaper today and what I see on television and hear on the radio. I hear some political messages out there in the present federal election that are simplistic and simple that remind me of the provincial election — simplistic and simple messages — and they are targeted at making people angry with other people in our society.

I know my Conservative friends will find this interesting. I was talking to some of the Conservative people in St Catharines who were complaining to me about the signs they saw. They saw a sign that said, "No more Prime Ministers from Quebec," or something like that, "No leaders from Quebec," and "No more distinct society." They were abhorring the fact that one of the

political parties was putting these signs up or at least was supportive of these signs. I had to explain to them: "Yes, isn't it awful? But you know where they learned that? They learned that from the Harris Conservatives."

I can remember in the last week of the last campaign, as other members will, that there were these multi-coloured signs going up saying, "No more easy welfare," or "No more job quotas." It's not only the message itself, it's the code that's out there. What does it really mean when you say that? So when Conservative candidates in the province today complain about another political party apparently being responsible for these signs, they should know that tactic was learned from the Mike Harris Conservatives in Ontario, or as I call it, the Reform-Conservative coalition here in this province.

Just as working people in this province were inclined, in anger, to vote against something in the last election, and some may even be inclined today, in anger, to vote against something, to respond to the politics of the promotion of resentment, they should remember the bill that was introduced this morning by my friend the Progressive Conservative member for Lincoln, who brought in a piece of labour legislation that would bring us back to the 1930s as opposed to bringing us into the 1990s. Fortunately there were enough moderate Conservatives in the House to vote with the opposition against it so that the bill was defeated.

People out there should know that these right-wing parties bring a message that resonates well, because it makes you mad at the system and makes you mad at the government. But behind that apparent agenda is a hidden agenda, and you can't buy half of the package; you've got to buy the whole package.

Just as some people were enamoured of some of the points brought forward by Conservative members in the last election, I wonder how many of the workers who voted for you, the government, were aware that you were going to bring in legislation which would be so detrimental to those who are unfortunate enough to be hurt in the workplace. I wonder if they were aware of many of the other measures that have been brought forward that certainly would not normally be supported by working people in this province.

The same is true of seniors. They look at some of the 1950s solutions that people are putting forward today, "Let's get back to the good old days when...." One has to ask, what will happen to those seniors? Yes, nobody likes crime, so we're mad about crime. Yes, we're annoyed with the continuous constitutional debate, so shouldn't we vote against something because of that? Well, you have to look at the whole package. "You can vote in anger if you want to," Premier Klein of Alberta said when he was endorsing the Progressive Conservative leader in Ottawa, "or you can vote for something."

One would hope that when people make the choice they won't, as they did in the last provincial election, vote in anger against something but rather will vote in favour of something, and that this time they will look at the whole package, the full package before they buy what's there.

Nowadays you put the leader in the denim shirt with the open collar and it's "just folks" talk that the leader

comes up with, but behind that is often a person whose agenda is to advance the cause of the wealthiest and most powerful people in our society as opposed to ordinary people. That's why I think it's important.

This bill is instructive. This motion is instructive this afternoon to people in our province who are easily attracted to some of the negatives, to some of the hot-button issues that are out there now. Keep in mind what happened provincially. How many people thought that my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs would bring in an end to rent control? I always like reading literature and I read some of his literature and that of some of the other Conservative members in Toronto. I didn't think they were going to end rent control, but lo and behold, I see a bill brought forward which ends rent control in this province as soon as somebody moves out of accommodation.

The seniors must be beside themselves, because a lot of seniors last time were attracted to the Conservative government, just as they're attracted today to the right-wing party that's busy out there with the hot-button issues. They're attracted to it, but you have to look beyond that. What's behind that? What more is coming? Now senior citizens, if they move out of their apartment to another apartment, are going to be subjected to potentially huge increases in rent, and on fixed incomes they'll be unable to meet that.

Some students might have been attracted to voting for something negative in frustration, but the students are going to find out when they move from place to place that rent control is going to be out of place and their costs are going to be substantially greater, on top of the costs being imposed by this government in terms of higher tuition fees and other costs that have to be incurred by students.

Vulnerable people, disabled people who require housing, who often require rental housing and want to be protected against huge and unfair increases in rent, are going to find that as a result of the rent control legislation it's going to happen.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Oh, sure.

Mr Bradley: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing protests, but I must say to him this is a time allocation motion. It's the widest and broadest of debates, with a time allocation motion, because we have to put everything in context. This is not debating the bill itself, because the bill will be debated in committee, if anywhere, and for one day in third reading. The debate is cut off on that, so we have to go to a time allocation motion.

I ask members of the government and I ask our senior citizens out there, did they think that perhaps this government was going to impose user fees for seniors in this province who need prescription medicine? Then after nine months they charged them for 12 months, and a lot of those seniors are very annoyed. But in the last election maybe they liked some of the things they heard from this government, just as today they like hearing, "It's time we got even with Quebec," or "It's time we started to deal with young offenders," or something of that nature.

Everybody, I'm sure, is frustrated with the continuous constitutional issue. Everybody is frustrated and opposed

to crime and is trying to deal with crime in an appropriate way. There's a pretty good consensus on that. But when you fall for that, you've got to remember, what about the old-age pension? What about health care? What about a two-tiered health care system when you turn over to the provinces the right to set up a two-tiered health care system, or the Americanization of the system? What about other social programs and services that are available from government? You can't cut everything. You can't have these huge cuts, further cuts, I might add, in government expenditures and not have it affect people. Who needs the services of government most? Senior citizens and people on fixed incomes and people in vulnerable circumstances, such as people who are unfortunate enough to be hurt in the workplace. Let's be warned of that. Let's be careful of that. Let's look carefully before we jump.

I don't think anybody was hurt on the cleanup of the Royal Canadian Henley rowing course. I'm sure they weren't hurt, nobody was hurt in that regard, but the potential is always there because there's work going on. But I was shocked and surprised, as I know members of the government would be, when I read a Progressive Conservative Party press release out of Ottawa that said, "Boat clubs are important; jobs aren't." It made fun of the fact that the Prime Minister of Canada was in St Catharines recalling for the people there that the federal government had contributed over \$2 million to the environmental — you will like this, Madam Speaker — cleanup of Martindale Pond, which is the site of the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta, and the dredging, so that we in St Catharines and we in Ontario could host the 1999 World Rowing Championships, and here's the Conservative Party making fun of this.

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Here's the other shoe to drop: This government actually matched the initial funding. So the Progressive Conservative Party is being critical not only of the Prime Minister and the local Liberal candidate, Walt Lastewka, who fought for and obtained these funds for the cleanup of the Martindale Pond and the restoration of the Henley rowing course, but also of this government. Can you imagine that, that they would be critical of this government? I was praising the government. I don't always do that, because they make some mistakes.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Like with the WCB.

Mr Bradley: Exactly. But when they announced that they were going to provide funding, an investment, as I say, in the dredging of the Royal Canadian Henley rowing course, provide a fish habitat for fish and for the people to enjoy the fish, and to scour the bottom and take out some of those contaminants, and to produce jobs while doing it, I was there to applaud, I was there to be supportive, I was urging that it happen. That's why I'm surprised that in the middle of an election campaign the Progressive Conservative Party would oppose that.

I know there could be people potentially injured on the job, and that's how it fits in with this whole matter that we're dealing with this afternoon. I don't think that'll happen because the companies involved are working very carefully. But if anyone were injured on the job, they're

going to find that under the provisions of Bill 99 they're going to be much worse off than they might have been otherwise.

I want to look also at why this government would be going through this process and other processes. You know, they complain — I was listening the other day. The Minister of Health, who is a former assistant to a cabinet minister in the Brian Mulroney government, always likes to point his finger at the federal government, even though Mike Harris on many occasions in this House said you shouldn't do this. He used to criticize Bob Rae if Bob Rae did that and said they were whining. What is it, then, when the minister whines? Is that a different kind of whining?

You see, what happens now is that provinces get block funding, that is, they get billions of dollars, in the case of Ontario, for the purpose of whatever they want. It used to be designated for education, it used to be designated for health; nowadays it's block funding —

Ms Lankin: Billions less.

Mr Bradley: Billions of dollars for block funding. What do these people do with that? And I know the member for Beaches-Woodbine would agree with me. Instead of taking the money and applying it to health care, as I know she would when she was Minister of Health, she would apply it to health care, these people take that funding from the federal transfer payments and they give it away in a tax break that benefits the richest people in our society the most. In other words, if you're making \$500,000 a year, you're going to get a bigger income tax cut than if you were making \$40,000 or \$30,000 a year.

I become a little perturbed when I hear them complaining, particularly when I remember how they criticized Bob Rae. Bob Rae was in a difficult time. It was a recession in those days and he didn't have the kind of revenues that these people are able to have coming in.

Ms Lankin: Brian Mulroney was cutting funding.

Mr Bradley: And Brian Mulroney, as the member for Beaches-Woodbine reminds me, with Jean Charest in his cabinet, was cutting the funding. He initiated the funding cuts and now they seem to be complaining about it. They want to rush some money back into it. All they had to do — I know the NDP didn't want to do this, but under the social contract provision there were some difficulties. I know they didn't want to do it.

Ms Lankin: I get to speak today, remember.

Mr Bradley: The member gets to speak, and I agree with her that those were difficult times. I'll tell you, on many public occasions I have defended the circumstances under which the government of the day reigned.

I want to quote Premier Harris, then the Conservative leader, when he talks about the government of the day complaining about other levels of government. Premier Harris on May 11, 1994, in this House said:

"We suggest that the Premier and the Legislature should turn their energies to fix that which is broken here in the province of Ontario. I tell you this: If the Premier spent as much time working towards making Ontario great again as he spends at pointing fingers and running down other levels of government, then Ontario would be great again."

Wonderful advice for the government to follow, because they were prepared to give that advice to another Premier of this province in a previous government. Gary Carr, another member, now in purgatory, made some references, but the Premier says this, again on May 11:

"All we've heard from the government is whining that we need more money from a bankrupt federal government. I believe that it is time for us to stop whining. It is time for us to fix that which is broken right here in our own province. It's time for us to take back our own destiny again, get our own affairs in order again."

I agree with the Premier. You see, I'm not always negative. I'm in opposition but I'm not always negative. I agreed with what the Premier had to say and that this government —

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: The members I hear over there whining shouldn't whine. Mike Harris is right when he says his own government shouldn't whine at the federal government when it has full control over the funds that come from the federal government, block funding. They can spend it any way they want and they've chosen to give it away in a tax break instead.

I want to share with members of this House my prediction that this government, ever impatient with the democratic process, and particularly the right-wing zealots in the government — I won't say who I was looking at coming down the aisle. The right-wing zealots in the government are eager to slam shut the door on debate as often as they can, so I'm predicting they're going to bring in drastic and draconian rule changes which will make the previous changes made by another person in another government look like moderate changes. That will not be good for democracy.

The member for Beaches-Woodbine and I were in a meeting with the government House leader this morning and both of us said it is totally unacceptable that six days of hearings would be allowed on this mammoth and major piece of legislation. If you want to have appropriate input you've got to go to many centres in Ontario. You've got to hear from the workers and the employers and anybody else who has an interest in this legislation, because we don't think the legislation as written is appropriate and going to be beneficial to workers in this province. I encourage the government to provide more time. I encourage the government to abandon this particular motion to allow further debate in this House, but as important, to allow far more time for consideration of the views of the public.

Again, the member for Beaches-Woodbine was well prepared this morning at the House leaders' meeting. She said when the Liberal government was in power and brought in changes to the Workers' Compensation Act, they provided several weeks, I think, of hearings and consideration. She said that and the government was caught, obviously, without this information. She was appropriately saying that the same kind of consideration should be given now that we have this kind of bill before us; that as the David Peterson Liberal government was generous in the amount of time that it provided, it was up to the government today —

Ms Lankin: I also talked to you about Bill 40.

Mr Bradley: And as she points out, the amount of time there was for consultation with Bill 40 by the NDP government.

And so — I think I'm going to lose my voice —
Applause.

Mr Bradley: I noticed a round of applause began as I said I might lose my voice this afternoon.

1610

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): But your backup is right here.

Mr Bradley: But my backup from Windsor-Sandwich is all set to go, I'm told, although she's going to talk to the member for Cochrane South for a moment to see whether there is a reasonable arrangement in speaking.

I think what the government is doing this afternoon is unnecessary. It's not in the interests of the workers in this province. It's not in the interests of the democratic process. I'm sure in their heart of hearts there must be members on the government benches who disagree with the decision of the advisers to the Premier.

I was watching a program on TVO, I think it was last night, where they were talking about advisers to Premiers. They really demonstrated, they really showed who advises the Premier in this case and who has all the power. I think Guy Giorno would speak to the Premier and Tom Long many more times than virtually any member of the government caucus. That's unfortunate. You should tell Guy to find himself a riding. Of course, then he would lose power, because he'd be an elected member and they'd find a new adviser who had been down to the United States to talk to the Republican Party to determine what is good for Mississippi, Alabama and all those so-called progressive states in the United States.

I'm going to disappoint members of the House by cutting short my remarks this afternoon, as I have agreed that some other members should have the opportunity to provide their views to members of the House. I'll be listening with a good deal of interest and anticipation to those who will be speaking subsequent to my remarks.

Mr Bisson: Unfortunately, because of this closure motion the government is bringing forward, we have left for our caucus an hour and eight minutes to debate at second reading what is going to be one of the most fundamental changes to the workers' compensation system in many years. Let me, in the 10 or 15 minutes I have, try to go through quickly the issues that are most important to my constituency. I'll leave some of the other issues for the rest of my caucus members.

I come from a riding where there are many miners who have been diseased because of exposure underground. One of the issues we have been very involved with in my riding is trying to make sure that those workers who have been diseased from working underground — people who have gotten silicosis, lung cancer, cancers of the trachea and the stomach and other areas — are fairly treated by the Workers' Compensation Board and that their particular disease, the catastrophic event they have to live with, is recognized by the Workers' Compensation Board and they get some form of compensation.

In many cases these people die. We're talking about people's lives, and making sure the Workers' Compensation

Board adequately recognizes that the death was caused as a result of exposure underground. We've managed, over the last number of years in our community, through work done by the Steelworkers, myself and the victims of the mining environment — I'm talking of widows of people who have died because of working underground — to get the Workers' Compensation Board to recognize that the disease was as a result of their exposure working underground.

How did we do that? We did that two ways. One of them was that we stacked the bodies up before the board. I was a member of a project team that for a number of years walked through the cemeteries of the cities of Timmins, Kirkland Lake and Whitney, picked up the names off the tombstones and then matched them to a database we had created of people we suspected had some sort of lung impairment from working underground. Nine times out of 10 when we got a match and were able to find people, we were able to prove, in most cases, that the death was a result of what had happened to them underground.

What we did with that information was not only to put it before the Workers' Compensation Board, but we were able to get it recognized as an industrial disease. Today if you look in the Workers' Compensation Act, in the policy manual is something that's called the gold miners' policy. That's as a result of people in my community — like the Steelworkers, the victims of the mining environment, the widows themselves, some of the survivors and myself — who worked very hard to get the board to recognize that.

How did we do it? We did it by going before the board and making the case, and ultimately going to what we call, in the jargon of workers' compensation, WCAT. We went before the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. Why? Because the board did not recognize that these diseases were as a result of working underground. The board allowed us to go there, to present all the information we had, present all the stats we had; we piled up the bodies and in the end the board said, "There is a relationship." Because of that, literally hundreds of widows in my area got compensation as a result of their husbands having died from working underground.

This government is going to close the door to other hundreds and thousands of victims of working in industry across this province. Why? Because they have an ideological belief that workers don't have the right, if the policy manual doesn't say it, to a fair hearing from the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal.

You're shutting the door. I say to you, shame. I say to a government that does that, you are a callous bunch for not giving workers adequate recourse for what is a very tragic condition underground. What you're doing in this act, among a number of things, is closing the door to WCAT. You're saying that in the future the only thing WCAT, the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, can deal with is what is in the policy, and if it ain't in the policy, it doesn't exist.

I'll tell you, we have cemeteries full of people who died and we got justice for them because we were able to get to WCAT and prove what happened to these miners. You're closing the door. In the name of the victims and

in the name of the widows and the families, I say to this Conservative-Reform government, shame on you.

The second piece of this tragedy is what you're doing to the Occupational Disease Panel. We have had in this province, luckily, some of the best minds come together at the ODP, who looked at all these issues of what happens when people in the workplace are exposed to various chemicals, not only in mining, but in all kinds of industries.

It has been recognized that Ontario is the leader when it comes to this field. Why? Because we within the NDP, the labour movement and, yes, the former Conservative and Liberal and Bob Rae governments allowed the ODP to evolve to where it's at right now, so that when workers come forward and say, "There seems to be a relationship between this disease the worker got and where the worker worked; there seems to be some sort of correlation," the Occupational Disease Panel then had the ability, because of the legislation, to say, "Let's investigate this, if there seems to be some cause."

The ODP went out and hired the best scientists, did the reports that needed to be done and eventually gave a recommendation to the Workers' Compensation Board. Then they recognized that as part of the devolving development of policy when it comes to how we deal with diseases underground.

What are they doing? They're shutting that door. They're saying that at the end of all this the ODP won't exist. I say to you, shame. I say to the members across the way, you have a lot of gall, by effectively shutting down WCAT, to close the door for people when the policy doesn't fit the injury or the disease. You're shutting the door by shutting off the ODP, in the name of following some ideological principle that somehow these things don't exist, and if they do it's the worker's fault and they shouldn't be compensated.

You are dead wrong on this one, and I'll tell you, you will be gone as a government. I will do everything in my power as a New Democratic member, when we are re-elected as a government, to come back and revisit these issues so that we're able to make the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal work as it was: an avenue for workers when the policy doesn't exist, so they can get justice.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Don't you start heckling me, sir. This is a serious issue and you have a lot of gall. At this point, I'd be sitting on the other side of the House with my head down, not sitting there with some flippant comment as if this doesn't exist. These are people we're talking about. These are people who have died because of having worked in industry, people who have been compensated because of what happened to them in the industry. You're closing the door on them. Shame on you.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): Shame on you. Leave the politics out of it.

1620

Mr Bisson: "Leave the politics out of it," sir? Give me a break. What do you think you guys are doing?

I say to this government, if they have any civility, that when we're going through this process of committee, we should at least revisit the issue of WCAT and the issue of

ODP, with an aim of making sure that workers have justice. It is not only the workers in the city of Timmins or the town of Kirkland Lake and the mining communities of Sudbury or Elliot Lake who are affected by this; there are workers in your community. There are workers in all kinds of industries, from paint factories to chemical factories, to firemen and a number of other different professions, who come into contact with chemicals, who in the end, with that toxic cocktail as they call it within industry, end up either diseased or dying because of that particular exposure. I say to you: Shame. You are not going in the right direction; you're going directly the wrong way.

I want to say one other thing in the few minutes I have. Really interesting was a letter that came across my desk after the election in June 1995. By about the beginning of July, I got a copy of a letter that was sent to the now Minister of Northern Development and Mines from the Ontario Mining Association, signed by Pat Reid, the spokesperson for that organization. I don't have the letter with me now, but it basically said: "Here, Mike Harris, our government, our friends, to whom we gave lots of money in our fund-raising to get you guys elected, is what we want to have happen when it comes to the issue of WCB. We have elected our government and now we want you guys to pay up."

What did they ask for? They wanted the Occupational Disease Panel gone. Is it a coincidence that it's gone? They wanted WCAT shut off. WCAT is being shut off. Is that a coincidence? No. This is yet another example of where this government is saying exactly where they're coming from, and that is, "This Mike Harris-Reform government supports only the interests of big business." They have no concern whatsoever when it comes to the small business entrepreneur or the workers of this province, who are the backbone of this economy. You listened to only one group of people, and for that I say you are wrong and I say shame.

The other point I have to make is that we are only going to have a mere 10 days total for committee hearings on this bill, four days while we are in session and six days when we're out on the road some time in July. That is the mere amount of time this government is giving workers in this province and victims of the mining environment to have their say. If you have any respect for the democratic process, on this bill you have to give adequate time so that people can have their say, because one of the things that is quickly becoming apparent is that this government is not listening to the people of Ontario and is acting in a dictatorial manner.

I will make sure that I go back to my community and other people I deal with across the province when it comes to this issue to make sure they use what little time we have to stack up the bodies before the legislative committee, to understand what it is you guys are doing.

I want the government to reconsider those two components I have raised. There are other issues I wish you could reconsider, but unfortunately there is not enough time in this debate, because this government is using a closure motion. I'll leave it to members of my caucus to raise those other issues.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity of having spoken, and I say to this government, reconsider what you've done.

Mrs Papatello: I'm very pleased to speak to this motion, which is a time allocation motion on Bill 99. I always find time allocation motions interesting, because they are the government's way of limiting debate on things that are of great interest to Ontario residents, in particular today.

The members opposite were wondering what kind of pamphlet I was leafing through. Given that we are trying to restrict debate, I have decided that my time debating time allocation motions is better spent asking the government why you would have us restrict debate on issues that are very significant.

I'd like to review the post-Martin printing of the Common Sense Revolution, because we're talking about a promise regarding WCB reform that the government made during the election campaign. What else did they promise to do and what in fact have they been doing? I thought we would start and quickly run through the campaign document of a Reform, right-wing government. We've seen the proliferation of the right, of late in particular, through the PCs, the Conservatives, the Reformers, and I would like the people at home to understand that when we're discussing a right-wing government, regardless of what level of government or parties you find them in, you'll now see the real face of the right wing. They want to assuage you with appropriate words and make you feel very comfortable, but the reality of a right-wing government is a very dangerous thing.

I want to specifically mention to the people at home that the thing I find most offensive is Mike Harris saying he's doing the things he said he was going to do. As a matter of fact, as we leaf through their very document, we see that is not the case. This document was printed after the Paul Martin federal budget had been delivered, and they decided that they would publish their revised projections. They looked at the promises they had made in their document and said, "These are the promises we stand on" — after the Paul Martin budget.

As we all know, the federal government moved all their transfer payments into one block, gave that block transfer to the provinces and the provinces were to decide where they would choose to make cuts. All the members opposite were thrilled at the budget control that was expressed by the federal Liberals over the last term of their government. Everyone was thrilled. As a matter of fact, the Premier said, "Oh, the feds haven't cut nearly enough." But the federal Liberals' Paul Martin, in his budget, took that grant that he sends to every one of the 10 provinces, blocked it, said, "Here is your grant," and didn't specify what the provinces were to do. It was up to the provinces themselves to decide what their priorities would be and where they would choose to cut.

We in Ontario have lived with the decisions of the Mike Harris government on where they have chosen to cut. Pure and simple, they have cut health care. Pure and simple, they have cut education. That is a direct result of the right-wing, Reform government here in Ontario, and I caution everyone at home to use very sound, prudent judgement when reviewing the agenda of a right-wing

party. In fact, what they say is not what they mean, nor is it what they do.

We in Windsor and Essex county live with the realities of the cuts of the Mike Harris government. The emergency services on the west side of Windsor are gone, and in their place we have posters across windows, having to be printed in seven different languages to meet all the various ethnic communities that emergency service catered to. Instead, you can find in Arabic, French, Italian, Vietnamese, all of those languages, a poster that says, "Go find your services elsewhere." That's what they said. That is the true face of the right-wing party that is in government here in Ontario. Make no mistake, that is a direct result of Mike Harris's cuts to hospitals across the board.

What we see here starts with this great new plan of creating 725,000 jobs. We are getting to the mid-term of the Mike Harris government. We've had two years of Mike Harris in Ontario. We are nowhere near the job creation projections they set in their document. As a matter of fact, today we have fewer people employed in Ontario than we had under a Liberal government. That is a fact. We have more people in Ontario and the government has not responded to that. We simply aren't anywhere near that promise.

They also promised that they would cut the provincial income tax rate by 30%. That was a promise. During the campaign the candidates would condense that promise into, "We're going to cut your income tax by 30%." That's exactly what they would do, and it would leave the impression with the public that if they paid \$10,000 annually in taxes, suddenly they were going to pay only \$6,000-and-some in taxes; and nobody would change their idea, because the reality is always in the fine print, especially with a right-wing government, a right-wing party that wants to throw out the simple line. The result is that the 30% promise is to the tax rate, which is only applicable to the provincial portion of the total taxes you pay. It's a rate cut, not a cut in the overall taxes you pay. So the people, quite frankly, were really fooled into believing there would be some huge kind of cut.

I mentioned this morning that if we look at how much we personally saved in the tax cut, with the coffee prices that have been going up through the roof over the last six months, the increase that we pay in buying a coffee has now used up the tax break that you gave us. I just want to thank you for spurring the economy, folks. It really hasn't had the impact that anyone believed it would have, and everyone has said, "I don't know where my tax cut is, because so far they promised they were going to deliver half of it" — half of what was unclear — "in one year."

1630

Ernie Eves begged the Premier: "Don't do it. Don't do it, because we can't afford it." Well, over two years now, they've decided — they're going to lengthen that promise. We know the effect now of that tax cut. It has significantly reduced the revenue to the province of Ontario. Yesterday, Standard and Poor's made their report on the credit rating for Ontario. What have they given Mike Harris as a credit rating? AA-. That is what Bob Rae had in his years as Premier of Ontario. Now we can equate

the fiscal control of Ontario: Mike Harris equals Bob Rae. We'll let the people decide on that.

We have to acknowledge as well that in those years we were certainly facing very different economic times.

Ms Lankin: Thank you.

Mrs Papatello: You're welcome. The reality is that it should be easier for Mike Harris, because we're supposed to be in an economic boom. Well, if we're in an economic boom, why did Standard and Poor's leave the credit rating at a mere AA-? You should be boosting that. We know the effect that a rating like that has. It has a very significant effect on the interest rates that you pay on the loans the government has out.

This document went on to promise reducing non-priority government spending by 20%. I think we should look at the Ministry of Environment as the example. Fully half of the Ministry of Environment is gone.

What does that mean to a community like Windsor? We didn't have a large environment office. The office is gone. One of the best employees in Ontario, Jim Drummond, who worked for years as a member of the civil service, is gone. He was very well relied on, not just by citizens but by the private sector. He came in and did consultations; he was well used. People had a great respect for his opinion and he was there specifically to protect the environment. The rumours now are that at some time, if it hasn't already started, they will not even be able to take any complaints over the telephone, that they won't even have an intake of complaints by citizens because they can't do anything with them anyway.

I feel very bad for the personnel there who are left to work with that, because they know they should be doing major investigations in a number of areas, but half of the ministry is gone. Apparently this government considers it non-priority. But even if that were the case, what they promised were 20% cuts. They broke that promise and went far beyond that.

The plan guarantees full funding for health care. The Conservative Party does its own polling on what people think of this government's handling of health care, and your own polling tells you that nobody believes that. If I stand here today and say, "We don't believe you've maintained health funding appropriately," you won't believe it, but you're going to believe your own focus groups, because that's exactly what they told you. They don't trust you with health care, nor should they trust any right-wing government or party that purports to protect health care. We saw the Alberta model and Ralph Klein. Where did he fail? Health care. Where are we failing in Ontario? Health care, pure and simple.

They said that they were going to subject this plan to an independent analysis by one of Canada's economic experts. We know that once this government was elected, we went back and saw that there weren't really very many economists who even believed that tax cuts would create the kind of economic stimulus to get people spending their money, and in fact to date it has not happened.

The difficulty we have with such massive layoffs across the government sector is that when you look at a province like Ontario, Ottawa happens to be in Ontario as well, so we have a greater percentage of civil servants

working in our province than in any other province. Fully 25% of the workforce in Ontario belongs to the public sector. When the public sector is under siege like this, these people are not going to run out and buy their new car or invest in a new home, a larger home. These were all promises that Mike Harris gave us. He said, "With that tax cut, they're going to run out and buy new fridges and stoves." Well, that is not the case. When 25% of the workforce feel they are under siege, when they are looking around the corner and behind their back to see if they are next, these are not the people who are going to boost consumer spending. There isn't that kind of confidence in the market.

They talked about eliminating red tape and reducing the regulatory burden. All we can say about that promise is that "red tape" is synonymous with — required controls in the environment is a perfect example. We travelled with some of the bills that were supposedly these red-tape bills. You've eliminated basic environmental controls, which gives us today some significant worries in very basic areas like water and water quality, basic areas like whether or not a rock quarry can be expanded, and you purport to just hand over all of these regulatory controls to the industry itself. Most of the people in industry are not the bad apples; they are very caring companies. But we are always concerned about the bad apples, and your supposed cutting of red tape goes nowhere towards stopping the bad apples from getting away with damaging the environment.

Another promise that was made was freezing Ontario Hydro rates for the next five years. What that means to most people is that when you look at your bill, your bill will not change for the next five years. That's what it means to me; that's how it is interpreted. In fact, that's what it means.

When the Minister of Environment and Energy brought that into the House in his statement, all of a sudden that became freezing the average rate over the next five years. Most people who aren't involved with Ontario Hydro aren't going to understand the difference, but the difference is significant. What it means is, your hydro rates are going to change over the next five years. That is again another broken promise.

They also said they were going to cut the size of government, provide the people of Ontario with better for less. They say: "Performance standards will be set.... The best people, in or out of the public service, will be hired to provide those services."

Let me just give you a couple of examples of what a broken promise this is. If there is one document that is prepared by the province of Ontario that should be as close to perfection as possible, I would say that is the Ontario budget. There was such a scramble to get that thing ready at the last minute — and there were significant changes at the last moment. You really wondered who was in charge.

The effect in the end was that they decided to contract out the French translation of that budget, and when they did that, they made such significant errors in the French translation of the Ontario budget, the one that was just presented, that they actually used different names and different numbers and the budget papers were inaccurate.

Again, the public is pretty sympathetic about errors now and then, but the Ontario budget is the one document that should be the closest to perfection.

Frankly, I'm surprised that Ernie Eves, the Minister of Finance, would have allowed that kind of thing to happen. We wondered why that happened. They did not go to the people within their ministry, within the translation services who are used to doing budget documents, which is a very, very specific and highly skilled area of translation. No, no. They just farmed that out, and look at the consequences. Did that cost the taxpayer any more money? Was the Minister of Finance going to allow inaccurate numbers?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): No, never.

Mrs Papatello: No, they weren't. The Management Board chair even acknowledges that. So what did they do? They reprinted the whole lot. They reprinted thousands of those budget documents in French at a significant cost, thousands, to the taxpayer. Another broken promise.

Let me give another example that the public really should be aware of when it comes to privatization and doing better for less. This government has decided to privatize the enumeration of people who will be voting in the municipal election. So what all of us received at home not too long ago was that form you've got to fill out and give quite a bit of personal information on. Then you fold it all up and you pop it in the envelope and it says it's going to the Ministry of Finance.

1640

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Who is it really going to?

Mrs Papatello: The member for Essex South asks who it's really going to. As a matter of fact, it's not going to the Ministry of Finance at all, because at the bottom of that envelope is a bar code, and that bar code diverts that envelope —

Interjection: I wonder where.

Mrs Papatello: You wonder where? I'll bet Mr Hudak doesn't know where it's going. It's going to the American Express company here in Canada, privatized. A private company, American Express, now has all the private data of all the residents who are registering to vote.

I don't know if I should feel comfortable with that. One of the largest marketing companies the world over has been given a contract to handle our voting information. How should we feel about this? I had a call from a constituent, and his question was interesting. He said, "I just want to know, if I don't fill out the form, will I still be allowed to vote?"

If you read through all of the verbiage that was poured out through that ministry on what happens if you don't fill out a form, all it says is that they'll keep sending you another form. They never really answered the question. If you don't send your private voting information to American Express, we don't know if you will or will not be allowed to vote, which I believe is a democratic right.

More broken promises of the campaign. It talks about there being only one taxpayer, and what I find most interesting and ironic about it is that Mike Harris always

set himself up to be the big Taxfighter. He was supposed to be the guy who was going to protect our taxes. He said specifically, "We will work closely with municipalities to ensure that any actions we take will not result in increases to local property taxes."

I don't know how many of us in this room believe that our property taxes are not going to go up now, because we have just experienced the greatest dump of services from Ontario on to every city and town in Ontario. Cities and towns will only have a couple of choices: They are going to eliminate the service altogether or, depending on what it is, they're going to say, "Hey, we've got to provide this." Then they've got to find a way to provide the service and of course pay for it. But you're saying they're not supposed to have an increased property tax.

Let's look at it. They went through mountains of work, and they ended up dumping billions of dollars on to cities and towns. One that is particularly harmful, in my view, for the urban centres is the social housing. Instead of saying in their document that they were going to fix the area of social housing, they decided to just dump it. May I tell you again it's a perfect example of what the words say when you're dealing with a right-wing, Conservative-Reform party. That may be what they say, but that in fact is not what they do. Any opportunity at all the public has to view parties and the selection of who they're going to vote for, I encourage you to use Mike Harris as the example: right-wing, Reform. They say one thing and they do another.

They have another area they talked about, law enforcement. I think it's particularly timely in terms of what Mr Runciman, the Solicitor General, said today. He talked about being tough on crime. I'd like to tell you that in the history of Ontario so far, as ironic as it sounds, we have never seen a government more soft on crime than the right-wing, Conservative-Reform government we have in Ontario today. I'll give you very specific examples.

They are now talking about, instead of not cutting, which is what they say specifically — this is the promise: "Funding for law enforcement and justice will be guaranteed." We know that both the Solicitor General's ministry and the Attorney General's ministry have been cut. We've experienced that in Windsor; the family support plan office in Windsor closed altogether. "Law enforcement and justice will be guaranteed." Of course, we know that's a broken promise.

What we got instead is the discussion now that we want the criminals to just get up and apologize to the victims. They're just going to have to apologize to them and see if they can get any restitution. If the criminals can afford to pay for what they broke or what they stole, that's good enough. I'll tell you what's driving this government to do that. They can't afford, won't afford, have cut funding to the justice system to move these people through the courts so they'll do their due time. Right-wing, Reform, supposedly tough on crime, so far the softest on crime in the history of Ontario.

This government has just gone through all of this bluster about making the roads safe and they're really going to crack down, and the truck safety issue has been in the news. In my riding, Huron Line is the largest road; it runs right up the middle of my riding. We have had an

issue with trucks on Huron Line. As a matter of fact, last year we were able to do a ribbon-cutting and we brought in warning lights at Huron Line and Cousineau Road. What we said was that we wanted to at least attempt to stop the trucks and other vehicles from running the reds so it would be safer for the residents who live along Cousineau Road.

We would start and see if we had an impact putting flashing lights on only one side of Huron Line. Then, if we saw there was going to be some impact, we wanted to put the flashing lights going the other way on Huron Line as well, because the best thing to do is ensure that the truckers and the vehicles see the lights change, because it's quite a long stretch.

Here's what I got back from the Ministry of Transportation: again, tough on law enforcement, tough on crime, wants to crack down on road safety. That is such a bunch of right-wing drivel, because the reality is, when push comes to shove and you want them to actually put the pedal to the metal and make it happen, they're like a bunch of wusses. They just aren't performing at all.

I asked the Minister of Transportation: "How could you deny flashing lights on Huron Line at Cousineau when you know there is a significant residential development in that area? How could you deny warning flashing lights at the intersection of Cousineau Road and Huron Line when you know there are school buses that cross that intersection on a regular basis?"

We have a total cost, including installation, of some \$20,000 that could save lives. We have had deaths at that corner so far. Minister, you are aware of the deaths we've had so far. We sent you the pictures. The family of the son who passed away came to the ribbon-cutting on the one side. He is the gentleman who has been running petitions throughout Heritage Estates asking the ministry to come down hard, offer us more protection, and you had the gall on May 21 to write me a letter and say, "We're sorry, we think you've done enough." "I'm sorry. We appreciate your concern for safety and value the input of highway users."

What good is that going to do the people who live on Cousineau Road? I am not looking for sympathy; I am looking for another flashing light at Cousineau Road.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. I'd just like to remind those speaking today that we are debating the resolution in the name of Mr Johnson. Please continue.

Mrs Pupatello: Thank you, Speaker. It's really a pleasure to get back to it, because if we look at the document again, there are just a legion of broken promises under the right-wing, Conservative-Reform government of Ontario. We made up a chart. This is called the Chart of Broken Promises.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I didn't want to see the prop; if you can just refer to it. We are debating the time allocation motion. We're not discussing that other you're holding up either.

Mrs Pupatello: We are speaking specifically about the broken promise of Bill 99 in WCB reform. In fact, today is a time allocation motion, the government's attempt to shut down debate on a significant move, a change that they said they were going to do with WCB during the

election. They said they were going to cut 5% off the premiums to employers. They were getting the appearance of being really good to employers. "Oh, they're good for business." You know, "We're the business-minded gang."

When Mike Harris came to Windsor during the election — well, he didn't really come to Windsor; he came to the curb of the airport. He didn't even hit the pavement of the driveway of the airport. He just stood on the curb, and the media had to come to him. When he came there, he didn't tell people in Windsor that when he was going to cut the premiums by 5% to businesses, he was going to find that money by cutting the benefits to the workers who are injured.

There's not a good employer in Windsor who believes that injured workers should bear the brunt of having to find savings in workers' comp. No one believes that workers go out and purposely injure themselves and that they should personally pay the price for a promise to help make business better.

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Mike Harris was only standing on the curb, and again I say the right-wing leader of the day didn't come to Windsor. He only stood on the curb at the airport. As a matter of fact, the propellers hadn't even stopped. They didn't even shut down the airplane. He just jumped out, ran to the curb, said his little spiel about tax cuts, which we find today is all a broken promise, and he didn't tell the people that he was going to take workers away. He didn't say he was going to ruin their lifestyle by cutting benefits to injured workers.

He made a promise of 10% of casino profits to Windsor. We have nothing near 10% of profits to the casino in Windsor.

He also talked about referenda, which is another promise he made. He promised to listen to the people. He said he wanted more power to the people. We remember that whole referendum debate, don't we, gentlemen? Yes, we've been discussing that at committee, as a matter of fact. All I keep going back to is when the entire six municipalities in the Toronto area held an across-the-board referendum to determine whether they wanted to be a megacity, and on average the results came back 85% against a unified city, Mike Harris put his great big foot smack on top of that and said, "No, you're going to be a megacity anyway." That is the same Mike Harris, this right-wing leader, who promised to do one thing and in fact did another.

He talked about no new user fees. We remember that very well. As a matter of fact, he used to sing it. He didn't just say it, he used to sing, "No new user fees." I want to ask the people who were in the House today if they heard me read the letter from Marion McAuliffe. Marion McAuliffe only has one question for Mike Harris: "How many months in a year?" You've charged \$100 in user fees for drug services through the Ontario drug benefit plan and that was supposed to be for a year. Well, seven months later she was charged another \$100. She wants to know how many months in the year.

You can't promise one thing and do another. It's no wonder politicians have such a terrible reputation. You've

got the public's head spinning around like that woman in the movie *The Exorcist*. They can't keep it straight.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): That was a terrible movie.

Mrs Pupatello: It was a terrible movie.

I just have a great deal of difficulty, because he said very clearly, "No new user fees." Well, we've been doing a count. How many new user fees so far in the count we've had? It's 1,008. We're only at midterm, so you can expect that number is going to go higher, but 1,008 is the level so far of new user fees, this in the face of the promise by Mike Harris, "Under this plan, there will be no new user fees."

Mr Marchese: Gee, Mike said that.

Mrs Pupatello: He said a whole bunch of stuff. To the agricultural community he said, "No cuts for agriculture." Honey, this is laughable, because moments later he cut \$45 million out of their budget.

Then he said very specifically to seniors and the disabled, "Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut."

Mr Marchese: Ha.

Mrs Pupatello: That's all we can say: "Ha."

Particularly aging parents who have disabled adult children at home and who are trying to access the special services at home program know that pot of money is being spread over so many more families now. When you ask the Walters family in my riding if their hours have been cut, they say yes. That constitutes aid for the disabled, but they've been cut. The Walters family doesn't believe that Mike Harris — this in fact is a broken promise. That's all we can say.

He said, "Classroom funding for education will be guaranteed." I find the whole area of education quite fascinating because, as a matter of fact, when he talked about education he said —

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I ask you if in your opinion the member is speaking to the topic at hand.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. I've been listening very carefully to the member for Windsor-Sandwich and I've yet to hear those connections that will bring her within the resolution we're debating today.

Mrs Pupatello: Today we're talking about broken promises. Workers' comp reform, that's what the government promised the people of Ontario. Today we're debating a closure motion, time allocation, another broken promise by Mike Harris. He had in really big letters, "public involvement." That was on his document when he campaigned, "public involvement," so we've got to assume that the promise to do with workers' comp — he'd also listen to public involvement. There is not an injured worker in Ontario who would have suggested that he go this route with the changes he's making to workers' comp. As a matter of fact, there is not an injured worker out there who would have said, "Cut me by 5%." The broken promise in the Common Sense Revolution is that they were going to take 5% off the premiums for employers; they didn't say they were going to take it from the workers.

There isn't a good employer out there who believes that employees should be suffering because this particular government can't manage their financial affairs like they

said they could. If they could manage their financial affairs, frankly we wouldn't be in this mess. We have the largest debt ever. I thought you guys were fixing that up. If you were fixing it up, why is it going up?

Second, your famous phrase is to blame the feds. How can you blame the feds? They give you a whole block transfer and you decide to give a tax cut. We've got to be rational about how we're thinking here. We want things to flow when you're telling us something. You can't say one thing and then go and do another, but you've done that in a very significant way.

When we talk about workers' comp and workers' comp reform, we've got to think about injured workers and what's in it for them. We've got to think about the kind of retraining and schooling and education that's involved for injured workers, or frankly for anybody.

Here's a government that said education in the classroom wasn't going to be cut. Then they said, "All this money they're wasting in education is being wasted outside the classroom." I remember a young fellow, actually he was a young PC member in Windsor, and I asked him one simple question: "Do you need water or hydro, lights, to operate the classroom?" He said, "Why are you asking me such a silly question?" I said, "Because the formula the government is using to classify what is not considered classroom education funding is the cost to the school for lights." They're also not counting the cost of psychologists for children who need them. They're not including guidance counsellors or librarians, which have always been used by every classroom, at least the ones I went to, and the ones I visit now have not changed all that markedly. They're still there.

All we can say is that ministry after ministry, page after page, this government has broken its promise. What drives the broken promises is very simple: We have a right-wing, Conservative-Reform government in power. Here's a government that says one thing and does the other.

Here's a government that says they want to find some integrity in politicians. I say when you want to do that, you've got to start at the top. The leader himself has to show the way. The leader cannot be on record saying, "It is not my plan to close hospitals," and in the area of Metro Toronto alone we're facing 10 hospital closures. In fact, for the member for Kitchener to see St Mary's closing, that is nothing like what he campaigned on in the last election. The Conservative candidate in my riding was saying he'd never close emergency services on the west side. He knew they were desperately needed. He wasn't campaigning on that either. They're getting exactly the opposite of what the leader of the right-wing Conservative-Reform Party said they would get. That is the danger.

He said, "No cuts for northern development; no cuts to the north." My God, he introduced one of the largest taxes in the north ever: They're paying the whole shot for their licence fees. There's no acknowledgement of the extra costs and burdens of being in the north, even for economic development.

We talk about leadership. He said himself in a news release: "Leadership by example. Savings will start at the top." Well, they didn't just start at the top, they were

reversed at the top, because now that the Premier has spent some \$700,000 for new digs at the Premier's office, they keep giving the excuse, "That's actually going to save us money because we're moving all these new offices in." No. What we got for \$700,000 — we saw the breakdown — we have new carpeting. You've spent some \$70,000 on curtains and wood finishing. I think that's all very nice, but you cannot do that in the face of WCB reform and Bill 99, which has a dramatic impact on those who cannot afford it.

I would submit that the Premier didn't have to have new carpet at time like this. You're the Taxfighter. You're the guy who said you weren't going to do that kind of thing. You wonder why politicians have such a terrible, terrible reputation.

One of the most startling — nowhere in the document that this government campaigned on did they talk about eliminating rent control. This government is now embarking on eliminating rent control, a completely opposite direction to what they campaigned on.

1700

I would feel that all of those in the urban ridings in particular, where we are looking for the kind of protection those who live in rental units always had, looking for rent control — in fact it was Bill Davis, the true Conservative, who introduced them in the first place. Now we have a mock-Conservative government, which is in fact a Reform government, eliminating rent controls. I've got some significant problems with that. That is a complete reversal. It is a completely broken promise.

I thought that at the end of all of that we would talk again about the broken promise of the day. Today the broken promise is that you wouldn't introduce a user fee for drugs for seniors. But the right-wing government did exactly that.

The right-wing government did what they shouldn't have done to the seniors all over, which has them calling my office and saying, "How many months in a year?"

I say, "Twelve."

"If there are 12 months in a year, why was I charged \$100, which was supposed to be an annual fee, and I've just received another bill for \$100 before the year is up? Not just a little bit; it's shy by months." They're furious.

I look at this really sincere letter that I received on April 9 from Marion McAuliffe, very typical of the seniors' attitudes, not just here but in the riding of Windsor-Riverside. Right on Lesperance Road, I'm knocking on the door. We're anxiously awaiting the by-election there and I talk to Mr Manzone on Lesperance Road, and he said, "How many months in the year?" I was surprised. It's an issue right across the board.

If the government doesn't recognize that you cannot cheat people and think you can get away with it, you will pay the price. I would caution all of us who have an opportunity in the very near future to make a selection: Are you going to select the right-wing government that tells you one thing and does exactly the opposite? I suggest that you take a very close look at Mike Harris: a litany of broken promises that the public simply will not put up with. Thank you.

Ms Lankin: Speaker, on a point of order: Would you ascertain whether or not there is a quorum?

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this closure bill that effectively restricts the time we have to speak to a very important bill. They are restricting our ability to raise the issues, and I know why. They don't want the public to hear what the opposition has to say because if they do, it gives the public that's watching an opportunity to realize that what they are presenting here today through Bill 99 — mind you, it's a closure motion — has nothing to do with respecting injured workers or helping them out.

What's happening to workers generally across Canada — to the employed, the unemployed and the injured workers — is tragic. We have M. Chrétien, the Prime Minister at the federal level, who's cutting more ferociously and effectively than the former Prime Minister, Mulroney, the man everybody loves to hate. Prime Minister Chrétien comes and he cuts so very effectively but he does it with a smile. He says: "We're not like the Tories in Ontario. We're good guys." But he cuts his deficit. Let me rephrase that: 40% of his deficit reduction is due to the cuts made to the unemployed; 40% of all the cuts is due to hurting the unemployed. It's a phenomenal figure. It means that much of what we see by way of a reduction of that deficit is happening at the expense of those who have no work, and Chrétien smiles as he does that and says, "We're better than the Conservative Party in Ontario." How could he justify that? The rest of the strangulation on the deficit has to do with cutting \$7 billion or \$8 billion of transfer payments to Ontario. That's how he achieves much of his deficit reduction.

I point this out to say, with all due respect to the Liberals who spoke here earlier, that it's not just the Tories here in Ontario who are Reform-minded; the Liberals at the federal level are to the same measure, if not worse. Then I come back to M^{me} Witmer. Do you recall May 1 when I spoke in this regard? I talked about the mellifluous voice of M^{me} Witmer as she speaks to Bill 99. She did it again today. It's a steady voice, it's soft, it's comforting and it leaves those who are about to be inflicted with a great deal of pain feeling that somehow they should feel good about it because there's something in it for them. She did it again today. I heard her. I took four pages of notes as she spoke. She did it with that wonderful, antiseptic calm of hers that troubles me, usually, and it should trouble the people watching.

Again, I direct my comments to the public, not to the members opposite, because these are the people who need to know the agenda of this government. M^{me} Witmer today spoke for approximately 15 minutes or so, possibly 20, because I've got four pages of notes, and she said nothing. She essentially said nothing. I'm not sure it was instructive to anybody listening, and the reason it wouldn't be instructive is because she had nothing to say.

The first page of notes talks about the fact that reform started since 1984, then there was Bill 15 and continued reform. In 1995 they consulted with stakeholders. "Stake-

holders" usually means their business friends. Then she said, "...we were determined to secure benefits for injured workers into the future," making you feel like injured workers have got a stake in this, that they're going to benefit from this somehow — "we need to have financial stability." Then she said the focus has changed. It's no longer on compensation. The focus is now on prevention. So I was desperately waiting for this fine minister, whose mellow voice was pleasing the whole crowd at least here and everyone else watching, to say what she meant by "prevention" because we needed to know. Tories there on the back bench need to know as well, because I don't think they know. How could they know? We don't know because there is nothing in here that speaks to issues of prevention. I waited for her to continue with other remarks she made in the 15, 20 minutes and there was nothing on prevention. All she said was that we need to "complete the overhaul," almost making the word "overhaul" seem positive. But there is nothing in this overhaul that benefits injured workers.

You've got to look at the credibility of this government, but particularly this minister, because as I indicated, she has a way of making things seem credible. But if you look at the history of what you fine, honourable members have done, there's nothing honourable whatsoever at least with respect to workers, and injured workers in particular.

I want to enumerate a list of things you have done to show that you and your minister have no credibility on this issue whatsoever. You have gutted the office of the worker adviser, who was there to assist injured workers when the unions do not have the resources to be able to help injured workers. Those other 65% of workers who have no union have nowhere to go except someone like the office of the worker adviser, and you've gutted that office.

1710

You then gutted training to health and safety in the province; you then made a 25% cut in the health and safety division. You have laid off workers from the Workers' Health and Safety Centre. You are eliminating chronic mental stress. You have killed the royal commission on the WCB. You've abolished the Occupational Disease Panel, that very credible, independent group of people who did work on occupational disease and had respect internationally from a lot of people.

The Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal is being restricted and limited in its ability to do its work. They are prescribing what the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal can and cannot do. Then la ministre, M^{me} Witmer, stands and says: "We're working on prevention. That's the focus of this government's agenda."

I just read a whole list to you to indicate that there is nothing here that deals with prevention. The list of things I mentioned hurt this government's desire to do prevention, because all of the things she has cut in effect are contrary to the stated purposes of this government. So you've got to wonder about what this government says versus what it's really doing.

Speaker, I am noticing that there appears to be no quorum in the House. Could you check for a quorum, please?

The Acting Speaker: Would you check for a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: Other than talking about the fact that they need to do a serious overhaul, other than the fact that they talk about modernizing the act, other than the fact that they need reforms of the system — they need to restructure five agencies, they say, as they relate to the Workers' Compensation Board — other than using words that appear to be saying something, there is no substance in Bill 99 that supports injured workers.

So I look at the title of this bill again and read it out for the record: "An Act to secure the financial stability of the compensation system for injured workers, to promote the prevention of injury and disease in Ontario workplaces and to revise the Workers' Compensation Act and make related amendments to the act."

It talks about securing the financial stability of the compensation system and it talks about prevention. I challenge any of these members who are present, and those who are not, to show me how they're making the system stable and how they're dealing with prevention when I don't see it here today or in the act. I just don't see it.

But to the issue of financial stability in terms of dealing with the underfunded liability, I look at what they have done, and what they have done is to cut the employer assessment by 5%. What that does is to achieve savings, which is largely a gift to the employers, of \$6 billion. You have the minister today, M^{me} Witmer, come and talk about the fact that we need to deal with our financial system and need to make it stable and need to deal with the underfunded liability, and lo and behold, she cuts the employer assessment by 5%. She says we've got a problem with the underfunded liability and then she gives a gift away to the employers of \$6 billion.

How does she do that when she said today in the House that we've got to get hold of the underfunded liability? How can she on the one hand say we've got a problem and on the other hand immediately give the employers \$6 billion by cutting their assessment by 5%? Speaker, do you see what I'm telling you? Nod if you feel you're in agreement or disagreement so I can carry on. The Speaker wants to remain neutral. I understand. You get my point, though, Speaker, at least.

Then they say that in order to get the underfunded liability in check, what we have to do is to reduce the benefits that otherwise injured workers would be getting, so they are cutting benefits to 85% of the net average earnings from the current 90%. Speaker, I'm hoping that you're following this because it's important. On the one hand they give a break to the employers, and on the other hand, to make it up, they're going after the injured workers, because that 5% cut that the injured worker would have gotten from the original 90% of net means a cost of \$15 billion that needs to be absorbed by injured workers in order to deal with the underfunded liability.

Do you see the disparity in this? They're going after people who have lost their ability to work in order to deal with the underfunded liability. They're not going after the employer, who has the money that continues to provide work to people. They're going after the injured workers who have lost their means to be able to provide for themselves individually and for their families. I find that a terribly unjust thing to do, and someone has to speak on the issues of justice.

The members opposite often say that we don't have a monopoly on issues of justice. I tell you, some of us don't want to have a monopoly on these kinds of issues. We don't want to have to own issues that are connected, in this particular case, to injured workers. We would like the government to own in part issues of justice so the NDP does not have to be the only party that fights for those who are most vulnerable, and injured workers become very vulnerable by the very nature of the disability they acquire in the course of their employment. They need a party that fights for them, and I tell you it is not this Reform party here and it's not M. Chrétien at the federal level, which is attacking the unemployed, where not only do we have unemployment at levels not ever seen, but we have M. Chrétien, the Prime Minister, cutting the benefits of those who are unemployed.

We need to deal with issues of credibility. Those who are watching this parliamentary process need to listen very carefully to what these ministers tell us when they introduce bills, because what you will not get from the ministers is the detail that allows you to understand what this government is doing. That is why I gave a list of the things this government has already done, to give you an indication that it is not on the side of injured workers, that the focus indeed has changed. It has changed in two ways: not on prevention, as this government is saying, but rather cutting the benefits of injured workers and making it tougher for these people to survive an injury not only by having less money in their pockets but also by having to deal with a new system that doesn't respect them, where the planks are removed and the supports they once had are no longer there.

1720

What they get from this government are titles of bills that are very deceptive in terms of what they say but are very clear in terms of their content. They're changing titles from "accident fund" to "insurance fund." I remind you, this is an accident fund; it is not an insurance fund. This fund is connected to injury in the workplace sustained in the course of employment and it becomes an accident fund, not an insurance fund.

They removed from their purpose clause the words "fair compensation," to simply "compensation." Why would any government want to remove the word "fair"? Surely you would think this government would want to keep the word "fair," if nothing else. To remove it — under what justification? There is none. But it gives you a feeling of the modus operandi of this government. It tells you which side they're on, that we support injured workers and that the government over there does not.

When it changes the name of the Workers' Compensation Board to Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, it tells you the modus operandi is changing. It gives you a

sense of the new operation of this government that is not working for people, and that it's working in the best interests of the most powerful interest group in this country. Those are the employers, who by and large do well in our economy in this country. They do so at the expense of those who become unfortunate, in this case because of an injury they sustain in the workplace.

I have nothing very kind to say about this government. I have very little love for this government, because all the actions of this government are in the direction of hurting workers in general, and in particular with Bill 99 they hurt injured workers.

I want to urge those who are watching, if you agree with what we're doing, to write to Minister Witmer a letter marked "personal and confidential" so she gets that letter in her hands, and tell her that you are unhappy with this government's direction. If you, as an injured person, are in an area outside Toronto, wherever you are, speak to those Conservative members who represent you and tell them your displeasure. Communicate to them that you are unhappy with what they are doing to you and to your families because you've lost the earning power and no longer are able to provide. Visit them, talk to them, write letters to the Premier, because that is one way — not the only way, but one of the ways you have as a tool — to communicate your anger and displeasure with this government.

If you sit at home and do nothing, you are telling Mike Harris and all the other Harrisites out there that you agree with their agenda. You need to be vocal at meetings. You need to visit these members and look them in the eyes as they tell you what there is in this bill that focuses on prevention. Ask them to show you where there is prevention in place, because there is none, other than the cuts that you're about to endure by this government.

That is the least you can do, and I tell you, it will have a cumulative effect. It will have a very political effect on you and on those politicians, because in many cases politicians never get to see more than a couple of people in their offices with respect to a particular bill. So if 10 or 15 of you go into these offices of these honorables, les misérables across from me, I tell you, you will have an effect. There is a political effect, a politicization process, that needs to happen for us to be able to hold back the agenda of this Tory government.

Speaker, I thank you for your attention. I know my other colleagues want to speak to this. I urge everybody watching to make sure they fight this government as they do this.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm glad to have a chance to speak to this motion today, albeit briefly, and to basically continue from where my colleague from Fort York left off.

I want to start specifically from the motion, because while of course the broader issue of workers' compensation is in front of us and Bill 99 is what this time allocation motion deals with, what we are dealing with today is the ending of debate by this government on second reading, which in and of itself is not a bad thing if we're going to proceed with this bill. I say the latter because I think at the end of the day it's not as significant how long we get to hear each other, but on issues like this it's

crucial for me not just how long but how well we listen to people who are affected by major changes such as the one in front of us today on workers' compensation.

What I find particularly offensive about the motion that's in front of us is that, for a major change that's envisioned in this bill, a major restructuring of the whole workers' compensation system, this government is going about doing this in a way that is showing very little respect for injured workers, in a way that says, "We're going to deal with this bill in committee over the summer recess, starting in a couple of weeks, with the resources committee spending a couple of half days and then six days of hearings during the summer" — six days of hearings during the summer on a bill that's not only 106 pages long but, more significantly, alters in a substantial way the structure of workers' compensation in this province in a way that puts more tools in the hands of the system, in the hands of the board, to take away those very few benefits that injured workers have struggled and fought for over the years.

I couldn't believe my ears when I heard the minister herself today put it as she did when she said the focus will not be on compensation. To be fair to the minister — I don't want to take her out of context — she went on and talked about helping people get back to work and rehabilitation. I don't think any of us would disagree with the need for the system to do a much better job on that, but for the minister to say the system will no longer have a focus on compensation is to say to all those injured workers out there that we don't care about their injuries and we don't care about the limbs that many of them have given, the pain they have suffered, the injuries they have suffered, not just physically but emotionally.

Now we're going to make it even harder, as this government is doing, for them to be even fairly compensated for the injuries they have sustained. When the minister of the day stands up and says the focus will no longer be on compensation, it sets out for me in the most succinct way what this government is all about with this bill. What they are saying to those injured workers, whether they are recently injured or, as many in my riding are, older injured workers, is don't look to this government and certainly don't look to the new workers' compensation system once this bill is passed for any sense of justice.

At the end of the day, perhaps it doesn't even matter how many days we spend debating this, whether it's six days in committee or 16 days or 60 days in committee, if the government has really already made up its mind. But I think they could at least have had the decency to show that there was some openness on their part to listen to some extent to the stories that injured workers want to put in front of them. They will still do that. I know they will do that. I know they will continue to do that, as they have been doing in the two years that this Tory government has been in power, as they will do again this Sunday, June 1, when they will again have their annual day of demonstration in support of injured workers, I believe right here on the front steps of the Legislature, and as they will continue to do. As they will come in front of the committee over the summer recess they may not get the time they want but their message will be

clear. Their message will be that it isn't fair that they continue to pay the price for years and years of mistreatment.

1730

We can sit here and stand here and blame each other in terms of previous governments and who has done what and who has done enough and who has not done enough, but the reality today is that injured workers still by and large are having to pay not only for the sufferings they go through as a result of the initial injury on the job, but many of them are still, years after that initial injury, fighting the system to receive adequate compensation for the injuries they sustained.

When the minister of the day, the minister responsible for the system, says "The focus will not be on compensation," then I have to say to you, as a member who represents many injured workers, that is the most callous attitude any minister and any member of this assembly could take towards injured workers.

I particularly say that and feel that is so unjust when I look at what this government is doing with this bill, because it's not just tinkering with the system. It's again taking the approach that they have taken on other major issues of creating a crisis, inventing a crisis, as the Minister of Education talked about, and then going ahead and bringing in the sledgehammer approach and not reforming the system but eradicating any sense of justice for injured workers.

If there was really a crisis with respect to the unfunded liability, which the government is using as one of the primary reasons for proceeding with this legislation, then they would not be able to justify putting \$6 billion back into the hands of employers, as they are taking \$15 billion from injured workers through the cuts to their benefits that this bill will see.

That is really what it comes down to. It comes down to the same old pull and push of the balance that this government so much wants to do, again in saying to those who are among the most needy in this province that they're a group of people for whom this government particularly does not care and that they are going to continue to side with those who already have a good chunk of the power and a good chunk of the wealth in this province, and they're going to make sure that those people are even better off.

I have to say when it come to workers who have been injured on the job, I find that our actions as a society towards them is one of the most telling signs about our common beliefs. One of the problems I have inherently with this legislation — there are lots of pieces of it, but I think it's that basic philosophy that this government is taking that rather than saying, "Injured workers have already suffered enough and what we need to do, yes, if we can, we will improve the rehabilitation efforts, we will improve our efforts to try and get them back on the job, but while they are injured we will continue to support them, and particularly those who have been injured and are now into their years such that it is unrealistic to expect that they will ever re-enter the workforce" — and there are thousands of them across the province. For those individuals across this province we still have not done anywhere near enough, and this bill

will take away some of the small gains that we've managed over the years to get for those individuals.

I was a minister in the last government and one of the difficult decisions for us at the time when we came around to this issue of workers' compensation reform was when we changed the indexing formula, the Friedland formula. But at least we were able to show at the time that in doing that we were also putting into the hands of some of the poorest injured workers some \$200 a month that went to those injured workers who had been injured many years ago and whose benefits therefore were calculated on earnings of years past and were way out of whack with respect to the earnings they should be getting today if they were back on the job. So we provided that little catch-up, we provided that little additional benefit, which for many of them made a very big difference.

I know that this bill isn't taking that away, but the other changes in the bill are, because it's taking away the 100% inflation protection that we also provided to those individuals. The other reductions that are in here also mean that people will be receiving less if they continue to have problems in appealing their benefits. Now we are hearing that many of those people who did receive that \$200-a-month increase are being reassessed in terms of the percentage of the pension they have been receiving. As they go through the system again and try to appeal and re-appeal once again, they're going to find a system that's more insensitive and less likely to respond positively to their needs, to their concerns and to their condition.

It's that whole approach that I know the committee will hear about, even in the limited time of hearings during the summer. I just want to hold out some little shred of hope that at the end of the day the minister and the government will still have some room left to listen and to make changes to this draconian piece of legislation that's in front of us.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Further debate? The member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Ms Lankin: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Before I start, would you ascertain whether there is a quorum present.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present.

The Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Ms Lankin: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak this afternoon, because as we can see, we're in the dying moments of any opportunity for a member to have input into the second reading stage of this bill. I am quite distressed by the government's action today in bringing forward a closure motion on the Workers' Compensation Act reform that they have before this House. I'm particularly distressed by their lack of interest in hearing from members of the public, both employers and injured workers and representatives of workers.

Interjection.

Ms Lankin: I don't know if the member had anything further to add. My point is that the time allocation that's before the House does not provide for ample opportunity or sufficient opportunity for public hearings and public participation in this very important bill.

I know there are times when people watching must wonder, "Don't we hear this a lot?" and in fact, with this government, it's very true, we do. We went through the whole process of Bill 26, the omnibus legislation, where the government acted in the most anti-democratic way. It was referred to as the bully bill, you might remember that, where they lumped together all these pieces of legislation, brought it in and rammed it through. We had to go through extraordinary efforts in the House, the opposition working together — you might remember there was an all-night sit-in at that time, essentially civil disobedience within the Legislature itself — to force them to have public hearings on that.

You might remember recently with respect to other pieces of legislation where they have again short-circuited the kind of public hearings that are required, the opportunity for people to participate. We saw during the education bill, Bill 104, and the megacity bill, Bill 103, where there were hundreds and hundreds of people who did not have the opportunity to present. They requested a spot for the hearings and did not have the opportunity.

We will see the same thing again here, because the time allocation motion or the closure motion that the government has brought before us today — we've had three full days of debate on the workers' compensation bill here in this Legislature. What happens, for the people watching, a bill is called as the order of the day, usually some time after 3 o'clock or 3:30, something in that range of time, and we debate it through until 6 o'clock when the House is adjourned. So there's two and a half hours or so. We have had three full days of debate on this. Only a handful of the members of the Legislature have been able to participate in debate on second reading so far and they are stopping that process.

I find that shocking, but more shocking are the limits they have placed on participation by the public. This motion that's before us today only allows for 10 hours of hearings here in Toronto and six days during the intersession — during the time in the summer when the House is not sitting, which is when committees are allowed to travel — 10 hours while the House is sitting here in Toronto and six days during the intersession.

Let me provide you with a comparison. I did that this morning at the House leaders' meeting. I tried to convince the government House leader that this was wrongheaded and that this was not sufficient time for proper consultation with the public.

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Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: We don't seem to have any members of the official opposition party here, only one member —

The Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, that's not a point of order, and also you're in time allocation. I think you should understand that. When in time allocation and there's only an amount of time for the opposition, I think it's certainly discourteous to interrupt when you know full well you don't have a point of order.

Ms Lankin: I could point out at this point in time that yet again the government doesn't have a quorum, but I'm going to continue speaking to this bill because I want people to understand the limits that are being placed on public participation in this important piece of legislation.

I want to give you two comparisons. I want to point out that the last time the Workers' Compensation Bill was amended in a major reform was during the time of the Liberal government. I have to tell you that although it was major reform, it was minor in comparison to the complete rewrite of the bill that we see here before us today.

I don't think any of the government members would deny the point I'm making, that this is a major overhaul of the workers' compensation system. They say that themselves. The minister has said that. We may disagree on the content and the direction of that overhaul, but I think we all agree that this is major restructuring, a major overhaul, a complete rewrite of the act, a 106-page bill, 106 pages to the bill which is amending an already existing statute, an already existing law in this province.

In those Liberal years — and I know our party pressed for public hearings at that point in time; we wanted to have what was then reform of WCB out across the province — there were something like 11 days of hearings in Toronto and 11 days of hearings travelling out across the province, followed by 15 days of clause-by-clause analysis and dealing with amendments. Did you hear that? Eleven days in Toronto, 11 days on the road, 15 days of clause-by-clause dealing with amendments for something that was much less onerous, I was going to say, but that would impart my values with respect to what I think of the content of this. It was not as substantial a reform. Let me put it that way.

Look at the amount of time that was dedicated to consulting with the public and for members of the Legislature to hear from all parties that were concerned and then take the time to deal with amendments and debate amendments and do it clause-by-clause. Compare that — 11 days in Toronto, 11 days on the road, 15 days dealing with amendments — to 10 hours in Toronto and six days travelling.

Let me give you another comparison. During the time of the previous government, of which I was a member, there were major changes to the Labour Relations Act — the government will know it referred to Bill 40 — which they have since repealed. Those were significant changes. Again it wasn't a complete rewrite of the legislation. It was very targeted in terms of the changes that were made, but I admit those were substantial changes in terms of their content, not in terms of volume. At that point in time we had something like 11 days of hearings in Toronto, eight days travelling around the province and I think another two weeks of clause-by-clause analysis.

What have we got here? The government has provided for 10 hours in Toronto, six days during the summer which I imagine will become six days on the road — the committee has decided — and four days of clause-by-clause. Again, this is not taking seriously the job that legislators have to do in looking at a tremendously important piece of legislation with a huge impact, the ramification of which will affect the life of every injured worker and the family member of every injured worker in this province, that has an impact on employers with respect to the level of premiums they must pay and has an impact beyond even the borders of Ontario with

respect to some of the changes that are being made, like the elimination of the Occupational Disease Panel.

I had an opportunity to speak to this bill on second reading and I tried to point out to the government in a very serious way a couple of areas that I hoped they would take a real second look at. I pointed out some of the significant concerns with the way in which they want to interfere with the role of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal.

For some of the members who may not have been here at that time, let me point out to you that I had received an order-in-council appointment to the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal back in about 1986. It's a tripartite tribunal. I sat as a member of that tribunal for a couple of years, a full-time member representative of workers. There are members representative of employers, members representative of workers and independent vice-chairs. I sat on a number of original cases that began to set very important precedents in the world of workers' compensation law. I saw the importance of having that independent administrative law tribunal there as a review of the work and the decisions that have been taken by the Workers' Compensation Board.

Before that it used to be that the only area an employer or worker could appeal the decision of the board — and there are often disputes with the decisions of the board from both sides. It's not always simply the workers who are appealing. Many times it's the employers who are appealing. No one felt they were getting a fair shake, because the people who were reviewing the decisions of the board were the board. It was all contained within the Workers' Compensation Board. There was a hue and cry for reform for a number of years wanting the establishment of an independent level of appeal.

Surely you must agree with that, whether it's a court system or an administrative law system: an independent level of appeal, some sense of justice, some sense of due process. That's what the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal has provided in this province. Now the changes you are proposing in this piece of legislation will fetter the independence of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. You are going to limit their decisions to areas prescribed by policy of the board.

You've rewritten the legislation, you're changing the orientation of the board, you're appointing the people you want to it, they're setting the policy, and you're saying the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal can make no decision outside of that policy framework even if it believes it is in keeping with the intent of the law. They are an administrative law tribunal. Their job is to review the application of legislation and the decisions made by a bureaucratic institution, like the Workers' Compensation Board, and to review whether or not those decisions are in keeping with the intent of the legislation as passed by the members of this Legislature. You are fettering that independent review.

I believe strongly that this is very wrongheaded. I believe that you leave the parties who have the most at stake in the workers' compensation system without a satisfactory route of independent appeal and adjudication of any dispute they may have with respect to decisions that have been taken by the board.

I also pointed out how disastrous I thought it was that you were moving to eliminate the Occupational Disease Panel. I don't understand the reason for this. I urge government members to please do a little bit of work and read up on the Occupational Disease Panel. I bet there is hardly a member in this Legislature right now, on the government side, who could tell me why their government is choosing to do away with the Occupational Disease Panel. I would love to hear an answer. There are a lot of empty stares over there, because I don't think they know why. There can be no justification other than giving in to the lobby of a very small number of employer associations.

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It's not the broader employer community that wants this done away with. Most employers do not want to have workplaces in which the process involved in whatever manufacturing or work is in their workplace is dangerous to the health of their workforce or could create disease. Most employers don't want that. But there is a handful of employer lobbyists who have somehow gotten the ear of this government — whether it be the Premier or the minister, I don't know — who want to do away with the Occupational Disease Panel. The Occupational Disease Standards Panel is a group that has done work that is ground-breaking and it is world-renowned. Your government has received letters from all around the world begging you not to go forward with the elimination of this.

I see the member shake his head. I don't know why you're shaking your head. This group has done — has commissioned, I should say, because they don't themselves do this — but has commissioned some sterling research which has shown the connection between certain workplace processes and certain diseases. Surely you want to know if what's going on in a workplace actually causes a disease.

This is different than talking about accidents. We want to prevent accidents, obviously. But we also want to prevent workplaces or work processes from contributing to disease. Let me just say very briefly to the member: Think of some examples, and there are lots in our history, think of coal miners who died for years from black lung and it took a long time before people acknowledged the connection. Think of asbestosis. I can remember when workers were dying from exposure to asbestos and the connection was denied by their employers. I can think of a number of examples of that. I remember someone saying, "You know, we don't need to have a body count any more to put in place the right protections for workers." I can't believe you are proceeding with the elimination of this. Do you know what it means? It means more workers will die needlessly.

I just ask the government to please think about that, to please reflect on that. It's hard for me to believe that you seriously want to have input or that you're open to the possibility of change in this bill, given the limited time for hearings that you've put forward. It is essential that you listen to the representatives who come forward because some of the measures in your bill will lead us back to a time in this province when it took body counts of workers for dangerous or hazardous substances to be

recognized or acknowledged, for workers to be given the appropriate protection. I don't understand it.

The minister says that what she's trying to do is change the focus from compensation to prevention. Well, all of us want to work together on prevention. You have no argument from me on the importance of prevention of workplace accidents. Anything that we can do cooperatively together to achieve that we should all put our energies into.

I want to remind the government that in fact this is a compensation system. It's not a workplace safety and insurance board. It is workers' compensation. It was over 80 years ago that workers made the historic tradeoff. They gave up their right to sue. If you're out driving the street and not working and you have an accident, you might have cause for a lawsuit. You might be able to pursue a lawsuit. You know much of that goes on in our courts today.

If you have an accident in your workplace and you're covered under workers' compensation, you can't sue, even though there may have been negligence on the part of somebody — it might be on the part of the employer. If you walk down someone's steps and their steps aren't in good repair in a private home and you hurt yourself and they've been negligent, you can sue them. In a workplace, workers can't sue their employers. Why? Because they traded off the right to sue for the guarantee of a compensation system that would replace their wages, that would help them through a period of rehabilitation and to return to the workplace.

I'm not very admiring of this argument that we're moving away from its being compensation. That's what it should be. That's what workers gave up the right to sue for. If workers and injured workers are not going to be served well by the system, they should think about demanding the right to sue back, because I believe that's the only way they might get justice in the future.

I want to close by saying that all too often in this Parliament we see a government that is hell-bent for leather. They're going to proceed with whatever is on their agenda no matter what the impact, no matter what the ramifications, no matter what the desire for public participation. We see that again today. We see a government that is closing off debate before a significant number of members have had an opportunity to participate. We see a government that is limiting the access of the public. There are hundreds and hundreds of people who have already indicated they want to present to a standing committee on this piece of legislation. They have limited the public participation, by this motion we are facing in the House here today, to 10 hours in Toronto and six days over the course of the summer. You won't hear a tenth of the people who want to participate in this.

I suppose, as the member for Dovercourt said, maybe it doesn't matter, because maybe you don't want to hear, maybe you don't want to listen. I implored government members when I spoke before to look at this issue of the interference and fettering of the independence of WCAT, the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, to look at this issue of the elimination of the Occupational Disease

Panel and to please look at the treatment of older injured workers under the bill.

The minister talks about the changes made under the previous government around the Friedland formula. One of the things that was accomplished when those changes were made was to take some of the money that would have otherwise gone to that inflation protection and redirect it to a supplement to older injured workers who had been injured when the legislation in place in years gone by did not provide a decent level of benefits. Those older workers and their families were living in abject poverty. We increased their monthly supplement to try to bring them up out of poverty.

The other thing we did was, even when we changed the inflation protection and brought in the Friedland formula, which I'll remind you was negotiated with and agreed to by the employer community and the trade union movement working together on this, we provided 100% inflation to those older injured workers, because even though we had provided a supplement to them, they were still being so pitifully paid in comparison to what they would receive had they had their injuries more recently, under the legislation as it had been amended over the years.

This legislation before us today is taking away that protection. You're not only abandoning the Friedland formula, which is 75% inflation protection, and taking it down to 50% for all workers, you're taking away that 100% inflation protection for those older injured workers. I beg you to reconsider that. These are a handful of people in Ontario. This is not a huge cost to the unfunded liability, not that you seriously care about the unfunded liability at all; otherwise, you wouldn't have done this \$6-billion giveaway in rate reductions to employers, the WCB premium cut you made to the tune of \$6 billion. It's just a handout at a time when you're bemoaning the existence of this serious crisis of the unfunded liability.

The reality is that the changes the previous government made, of which I was a member, brought the crisis of the unfunded liability under control. That was headed down. There was a plan for reduction. We know we were all headed in the right direction. You, instead, are giving this giveaway, and you're making injured workers pay for it.

Let me just say again, while there is much more that I abhor within this bill, there are three areas I ask you seriously to consider: not fettering the independence of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal; not eliminating the Occupational Disease Panel; and not taking

this extraordinary step that will be so harmful to older injured workers and their families, who are already living at poverty levels. There's a handful of them. I hate to say it, they're not going to live forever. This is not going to cost you or the system any great amount of money to maintain those families with some sense of dignity through their remaining years.

Once again, we see a government that is ramming through legislation and is not going to give people time to participate. It makes us question whether there is any serious intent on the government's part to listen to the suggestions I've just made or all the other suggestions that you will hear when we do have public hearings.

I really think it has become almost a mockery of the democratic process when we see bill after bill after bill being time-allocated with insufficient public hearings and then the government moving and passing its own amendments and ignoring amendments from anyone else. It's almost a mockery. You wonder why we sit through these kinds of debates if you're not going to listen anyway.

The reason I feel compelled to participate in these kinds of debates is because I want the people in my riding and the people from the public to know and understand the nature of the changes the government is making. I want those older injured workers, when they lose the protection of that very meagre amount of money they and their families are living on now, to know that it is the Mike Harris government that sees fit to do that, despite others raising their voices in objection.

We will continue to raise our voices in objection. We will continue to work with people and encourage them to participate in the democratic debate, even if the government appears not to be interested in listening to people's participation, even if the government intends to continue to ram through legislation, as we see will be the result of this bill, which I'm sure the government will pass.

Although time is up, I did enjoy being able to participate in this.

The Speaker: Mrs Witmer has moved government motion number 20. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock Monday.

The House adjourned at 1802.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line	Should read:
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York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 2 June 1997

Lundi 2 juin 1997



**Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell**

**Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell**

**Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers**

**Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 June 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 juin 1997

The House met at 1333.

Prayers.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you ascertain whether or not there is a quorum, please.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Quorum call.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RENT REGULATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): You can judge a government best by what it does when it thinks nobody's looking.

The tenants of this province know that this Conservative-Reform government will be sneaking in the end of rent control legislation today. "What an opportune time," Mike Harris says. "Do it when they are busy with the federal election." Although they promised not to end rent control in their Common Sense Revolution, the Conservative-Reform government found a foot soldier who would do anything. Al Leach doesn't mind if seniors who are renting will be unable to afford escalating rents. Al Leach and Mike Harris do not mind if they demolish rental units to build condominiums. Al Leach and his government do not mind if the people who can't afford it will be subjected to the so-called private sector. This Conservative-Reform government doesn't mind if they sell the homes of those who are living in non-profit housing.

Sneaky as you are, the people of this province will remember this Conservative-Reform government which, although not in the Common Sense Revolution, decided very much so to end rent control on the backs of the most vulnerable people in our society. Shame on you. We hope that the people of this province, when the time comes, make sure that the Conservative-Reform government does not exist to have a second term around here.

ITALIAN NATIONAL DAY

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Today, June 2, is an important date not just because it's the date of a federal election here in Canada but because it also happens to be the Italian National Day. I want to pay tribute today to Italians in Italy and across the world, because we know that the presence of Italians is felt throughout the world and has been for years and years.

In the country itself, the Republic of Italy marks its 51st anniversary, but of course the culture which is

Italian, the traditions which are Italian and particularly the people who are Italian go back generations. Here in Canada we are fortunate, I believe, to have among us so many Italian Canadians who have made this country their home, who continue to see the future being here in Canada and who continue to see that, working together, we can build a strong, united Canada.

I want to particularly note that in this year of 1997, we also mark another important holiday a little bit later this month. On June 24 we will mark the arrival of one John Cabot, or Giovanni Caboto, as he originally, and always, was known, to the shores of Newfoundland. He was the first Italian to have landed here in Canada, to be followed some years later by Father Bressani, who was actually the first Italian Canadian back in 1642 to have lived here in Canada.

To them and to all those who have come afterwards to help make this country strong, we applaud you today.

FIRES IN MUSKOKA-GEORGIAN BAY

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have two stories today that exemplify the community spirit that is so strong throughout my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

Recently two terrible fires occurred in my riding. On April 17, Knechtel's grocery store and the local Home Hardware were destroyed in the village of MacTier, and just a week ago the Northern Planing Mills historic building in downtown Bracebridge was also destroyed.

From speaking to store owners and other constituents, there were great concerns about these small businesses and the effect the fires would have on the local communities. In the case of MacTier, there was great concern that the seniors and shut-ins would have no place to shop close by. Wasting no time, in both cases the local councils and business communities took swift action.

In the case of MacTier, the arena was closed down early, the ice was removed and both the grocery store and the hardware store set up there. I'm glad to inform the Legislature that both those businesses are now operating and the community is back on an even keel.

In the case of the Bracebridge fire, even some of the competitors of the building supply business pitched in to make sure that the business was able to open again just about three days following the fire. It is back operating; I visited the premises.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of the Georgian Bay and Muskoka Lakes townships fire departments, as well as the Bracebridge fire department and the Ontario Fire College, who all worked together to limit the loss and the damage to the local economies.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): Before the last provincial election, the government assured the public it would not make cuts to funding for seniors and the disabled. This has not proven to be the case.

Take the assistive devices program, upon which many have come to depend for expensive but necessary aids to daily living. Since the Conservatives came into office, this program has been slashed by \$22 million and this year's estimates indicate that the program will be further cut by \$89,300. This will considerably worsen the situation of individuals who already have to deal with unreasonable red tape to get the help they need.

1340

The provincial government will pay three quarters of the cost of a wheelchair of a person who can prove they require it for six months or longer. But what about terminally ill cancer patients like Sue Kisslinger of Hamilton, who was given six months to live last December? She may live longer, but since this is impossible to prove, Sue has been denied assistance in purchasing her badly needed wheelchair.

I implore the government to reinstate funding to the assistive devices program and to reformulate its restrictive eligibility criteria. People like Sue deserve the chance to live the rest of their lives to the fullest.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): For the first time in 122 years, the Ontario Legislature is sitting on the day of a federal election. As you will remember from last week, our caucus and the Liberals agreed that we'd be willing to meet on a Friday to make up for the day that Tory House leader Dave Johnson said was badly needed because they're so far behind in their destructive legislative agenda. We all know what's going on here. To quote my esteemed colleague Floyd Laughren from Nickel Belt, "Mike Harris is so afraid of Preston Manning's troops, he's giving the entire Tory caucus an alibi."

It's interesting which ones chose to come here today: the ones who are afraid to be out there in the communities because they might have to go from one campaign to another. I'm glad to see that —

Interjections.

Ms Churley: The member for Grey-Owen Sound, for instance; we all know where he stands. He comes right out and tells the public that he's a Reformer. He's honest about it, anyway. We know he's out there today in his riding fighting for the Reformers, helping to get them elected in his riding.

The members here today I guess are too chicken, to coin a phrase that's been very recently used in the press — as of yesterday, I believe — to say who they're really voting for and standing up for and working for in this election.

So we know what's going on here today, and shame on you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The members for St Catharines, Brock, Nepean and Halton North, come

to order. Statements are meant to be heard and I'm having difficulty hearing it.

Ms Churley: It was a good statement too.

The Speaker: The member for Riverdale, that's not helpful.

CLEAN AIR MONTH

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Clean Air Month is here. It's an opportunity for public and private sector employers and employees to improve the quality of air that we breathe. At the heart of Clean Air Month is the fifth annual clean air commute, in which thousands of people and dozens of organizations will engage in the fun and friendly competition to find a fresh way to get to work. In previous years, employees of participating organizations have left their cars at home to take transit, walk, cycle, roller skate and even canoe to work. Those who must drive to work have helped clear the air by carpooling and improved auto maintenance. The result is that thousands of people are learning about the links between pollution and ill health. Each organization is free to choose which week in the month of June it will participate in the clean air commute.

I congratulate Pollution Probe, the organizer of Clean Air Month, and I'd like to point out that this creative effort to involve workers and employers in contributing to a healthy environment is due to the substantial sponsorship of 18 leading corporations. Last week, Minister Sterling himself was leading the pack during Bike to Work Week. I urge each member present to follow the minister's example some time this month by finding an alternative method of getting in to work and by encouraging their constituents to do the same.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You can judge a government best by what it does when it believes no one is looking. Today is such a day. When the attention of the news media and the public is clearly devoted to the federal election, the Conservative-Reform coalition government of Mike Harris is sneaking in a proposal for drastic changes to the rules of procedure of the Legislative Assembly, rule changes designed to muzzle the opposition and make it much easier and convenient for the Harris government to ram through any new measures it deems useful to its agenda.

Everyone will remember the infamous Bill 26, the massive omnibus budget bill that took powers away from elected members of the Legislature and concentrated them in the hands of the unelected political advisers of the Harris regime and a few select cabinet ministers, and that established the hospital restructuring commission which is slamming the doors shut on hospitals across Ontario.

Only extraordinary action on the part of the opposition forced the government to hold hearings across the province, hearings that resulted in the government bringing in over 150 amendments to its own legislation. Without this action on the part of the opposition, we would have had a virtual dictatorship in our province.

Now, with everyone's attention diverted to the federal election, the government is trying to slip in its demands

for a rubber-stamp Legislature, disguising them as a set of proposals from a 27-year-old YPC trying to please the Premier for future considerations.

Make no mistake about it: These rule changes come right from the Premier's office, from the cabal of Newt Gingrich Republican Party worshippers who consider elected representatives, particularly the opposition —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for St Catharines.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I was proud to join workers on their picket line this weekend past at the Vincor factory, the old Brights winery on Dorchester Road in Niagara Falls. These workers have been called upon by their very profitable corporate boss to take concessions.

They've been working too hard for seniority terms of up to 25 years and beyond to begin now to take concessions in terms of vacation time and health care benefits that they've worked hard for, especially when you've got a company that has enjoyed the profits that flow from the hard work of these workers.

These members of the Teamsters union have been bravely picketing outside that plant as scabs have been running scab wine in and out of Vincor. I'll tell you what I told those workers this past weekend: There's no room in Ontario for scabs and there's no place on our dinner tables for scab wine.

I encourage those people who would contemplate purchasing a Vincor or Brights or Sawmill Creek product to abstain. Those wines have acquired a somewhat foul taste as long as they're being shipped by scabs. We can tell Vincor that they'll become far more palatable once Vincor gets down to the table and gets those workers back to work, where they want to be and where they belong. No scabs in Ontario; no scab wine in our dining rooms.

DONOVAN BAILEY

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): Yesterday, along with Premier Mike Harris and 25,000 other people at the SkyDome in Toronto, I attended a superb international track meet. There a young man from Oakville who attended Queen Elizabeth Park High School and Sheridan College once again astounded the world.

Donovan Bailey, the pride of Oakville, has captured the hearts of all Canadians. Yesterday he brought us together for one brief moment to celebrate the great achievement of a fellow Canadian, and he didn't let us down.

Donovan's fierce belief in himself, along with his winning attitude, his drive and hard work are a valuable gift to us all. Donovan's accomplishments prove we can make it to the finish line and win with perseverance.

In the spirit of friendly competition and patriotic rivalry, I hereby send a message to our friends and neighbours in the United States: Donovan Bailey is unquestionably unrivalled and confirmed the fastest man on earth.

ORAL QUESTIONS

RENT REGULATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Later today we will be effectively terminating second reading debate on Bill 96, your so-called Tenant Protection Act, while the election is on.

I want to come back to an issue I raised with the minister some weeks ago in the House. That is the issue around the words "income information" in sections 36 and 200 of Bill 96. Those words deal with the landlord's right to effectively discriminate against people of lower income in choosing tenants for a rental property. Minister, could you address your view of that section and tell us why the government included it in its bill?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): What we were trying to do in our very balanced piece of legislation was to ensure that both landlords and tenants started off on an equal footing. I don't think you can purchase any sizeable commodity without going through a credit check or providing like information, to get a credit card, for example, to buy a car, to do anything.

What we were trying to do was to ensure that landlords had the opportunity to review information on potential tenants, to do credit checks, and I think it's only a reasonable thing to do. However, if the member feels quite strongly, when we finish and get this bill out into committee, I'd be glad to consider an amendment if he wanted to put one forward.

1350

Mr Duncan: That's where the opposition differs from the government in its view of tenant protection. Housing is not a commodity that ought to be considered in the same breath as purchasing a car or other consumer-type goods. Housing is a right and ought to be treated as a right, and the minister clearly has lost sight of that.

If in fact we bring forward an amendment during committee hearings that would strike the offensive clauses from the bill and limit the government's ability with regulation to impact on this issue, am I to take by the minister's response that he would accept that amendment and strike the offensive clauses from the bill?

Hon Mr Leach: I'd certainly want to take that under consideration, but again I want to point out what we're attempting to do with this legislation, and that's to ensure that both the tenant and the landlord have adequate protection, to make sure they're both starting off on an even footing. We're providing the protection to tenants and we also would like to provide some protection to landlords. But as I said, as soon as we can get this bill through second reading and into committee, I'd be glad to consider any amendments the member wants to put forward.

Mr Duncan: It certainly will go through today. The government will jam it through second reading without adequate debate.

But I'd like to point out to the minister, as we have pointed out before, that it's not just the official opposition

that's calling for amendments to these two offensive clauses of your bill. None other than Keith Norton, PC, a former cabinet minister, chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, has said to you and to the Premier in a letter dated March 10 that if given the opportunity to speak at committee, they will propose similar amendments. The opposition, your own Human Rights Commission, and a variety of interest groups throughout the province are saying that these particular clauses of your bill are offensive and will discriminate against low-income Ontarians.

Will you now agree to repeal the offensive sections of the bill and acknowledge finally that this has nothing to do with tenant protection but everything to do with enhancing the position of landlords in this province at the expense of the poorest and most vulnerable tenants in Ontario?

Hon Mr Leach: Again to repeat myself, all the opposition has to do is to put the bill into second reading. We'll go into committee. There will be amendments proposed and we would be glad to consider any amendments they put forward.

Let's talk about the issue of "jamming" this through the House. I've never heard anything so silly in my life. We've had more debate on this bill than there was on the combined NDP and Liberal bills on rent control. On Bill 121, the NDP felt that one day of debate in the House was sufficient for an important bill.

Mr Duncan: You're just wrong.

Hon Mr Leach: Do you want to talk about your bills? Bill 11 and Bill 51 had a total of four hours' debate. Four hours' debate, and you want to talk about jamming a bill through the House? You'd better look back at your own records before you start throwing stones. We put this legislation out on the street a year ago.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Leach: Last June we put this out so that we could have a whole summer of consultation. Mr Speaker, this bill has had more debate than all of theirs put together.

GAMBLING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Jurisdictions throughout North America have increasingly come to the conclusion that legalized gambling is essentially a tax on the poor and the desperate and the vulnerable in our society. In the United States over the last three years, over 30 state legislative ballots proposing the expansion of legalized gaming have been defeated. In Canada, jurisdictions in Alberta and the province of British Columbia have banned video slot machines, described by many as the crack cocaine of gambling. During the last provincial election campaign, Mike Harris stated, "I don't want \$1 million a day into the province of Ontario." Referring to the blood money from gambling, Mike Harris said, "I don't want the Ontario government to have it."

Based on the compelling evidence before you, based on the fact that so many jurisdictions today are having second thoughts about gambling and the effect it's having

on the population, particularly the social fabric of various jurisdictions, based on that, Minister, will you give an undertaking that you will put a moratorium on any more expansion of gambling opportunities in this province?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): If I could remind the honourable member, we brought through Bill 75 with the intention of bringing a lot more integrity and accountability to the system. The majority of the provisions under Bill 75 deal with better enforcement tools to ensure that we don't have further expansion of illegal gambling, for example, but the government recognizes that there are certain difficulties within the sector. We have looked, for example, at the problem gambling area and we have allocated around \$9 million this year for research, training and education in this field. The additional funds have certainly been welcomed by proponents in the area.

I remind the member that when he brought in, with the Peterson government, the three-day Monte Carlos, there were no funds whatsoever allocated to problem gambling. When the NDP brought in the casinos, they at least allocated \$1 million towards this.

The government is trying to do things in terms of integrity of the game, increasing the enforcement, and to really deal with problem gambling.

Mr Bradley: Minister, you have the opportunity to look into the future. You can point fingers at the past and point fingers at other jurisdictions, but I don't think that's really helpful. I don't think it represents the concern that even members of your own caucus must feel about this continued escalation of gambling opportunities and about the fact that the OPP had a confidential report on organized crime moving into it. Maryland, for instance, is abandoning charity casinos because of the fact that the underworld is getting into this particular jurisdiction.

I don't think this is a Liberal, NDP, Conservative or any other party's issue. It's of genuine concern among people, not just the churches, which have expressed it to a great extent, and social workers and so on, but the general population, that authorities and jurisdictions all over are moving too quickly and too drastically into new opportunities, expanded opportunities, escalating opportunities for gambling.

In light of this, will you at the very least give an undertaking to this House that you will not allow at any time VLTs, video lottery terminals, in restaurants and bars in this province?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The honourable member touched on a couple of things: first, the aspect of illegal gambling to a certain extent, but he also mentioned the hospitality trade. I remind the member of what we actually said. We were looking at implementing video lottery terminals in the racetracks and also in the charity gaming clubs. We also said at that point in time that we'd monitor what happened and look to see what the facts were before we moved on, so the government has talked about having a pause in there to assess the situation. He directs me to a point we are certainly aware of and have heard from our members.

Second, dealing with illegal gambling, when the casino rules came in, the NDP government introduced screening rules to make sure that people were looked at in terms of

their involvement with illegal activities, that they tried to screen the people involved with the process. We believe we've continued with that process as well, that we have allocated more resources towards the enforcement against illegal gambling, \$7 million worth.

Mr Bradley: Once again, we can't roll back the clock to some of the things that have happened in the past. The minister knows that on a personal basis I don't even like casinos, but we've got casinos in the province.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): Lottery tickets.

Mr Bradley: You mention lottery tickets. They're out there, and I guess people have grown accustomed to those. What I am looking at is the escalation that's taking place in the province. I associate it with your tax cut, because you need revenues to make up for that tax cut. Is it really worth the damage you're doing to the social fabric of this province, to vulnerable people, to desperate people in our society, to those who are addicted to gambling? Is it really worth it to be able to give a tax break, an income tax cut that largely benefits the richest and most powerful people in our society, and then take the money away from those who are the most vulnerable in our society and wreak havoc in many communities, including the communities in the Kitchener area, where five mayors have asked that you have a referendum on casinos?

Minister, will you now institute a moratorium on a further escalation of gambling in this province?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I know the honourable member would like to somehow equate the government's initiatives, which it has continued with, with a tax cut. But I remind the member that a strange thing happened on the way to Queen's Park the other day: The government produced a tax cut for the people of Ontario, and our revenues are up. Gee, I wonder who said that. I guess it was us.

To deal with the issue the honourable member is raising right now, one of the reasons we brought in Bill 75 was to increase accountability. We've certainly heard, and I'm sure the honourable member has heard this as well from charities within his own area, that after having a three-day Monte Carlo, quite often the charities do not benefit at all. That is not the idea behind these things. That's where Bill 75 comes in, to increase the accountability of government, to increase the accountability of people within this area, to make sure the charities benefit. Currently the charities benefit about \$10 million to \$12 million a year, which will be increased to about \$180 million under these new charity gaming clubs.

1400

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Could you tell us, aside from the Ontario Mining Association, who urged you to abolish the Occupational Disease Panel?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): The honourable member may know that we have had a very thorough review of the Workers' Compensation Board and are doing a thorough review of occupational health and safety in this province. We are attempting to coor-

dinate and have one vision and one strategy. The stakeholder consultations were started by Minister Jackson and were completed by me. We feel that the Workers' Compensation Board is in the best position to take over the responsibility for the prevention of illness and injury.

Mr Silipo: It's no wonder the minister is only allowing 10 hours of hearings in Toronto on Bill 99. I think what I can take from the answer she gave was that nobody but herself and her Premier wants to abolish the Occupational Disease Panel. She is looking forward, I'm sure, to the fact that people will be so busy denouncing all the other draconian changes in the bills that the effects of occupational diseases will be overlooked.

She knows there has been an international outcry against her plan to scrap the Occupational Disease Panel. But, Minister, you're trying to make sure the committee won't even have a chance to change this part of the bill. What's the rationale for allowing, with the major changes you are making, only about half the hearing time for Bill 99 as you did for your so-called housekeeping bill to the Employment Standards Act?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I want to make it abundantly clear that we are changing the focus for health and safety in Ontario. We are not satisfied with the number of fatalities and illnesses in this province, so we have changed the purpose clause at the Workers' Compensation Board. They have now assumed responsibility for safe and healthy workplaces.

As a result, we've taken a look at the five agencies that support the board, and we have decided to consolidate some of those activities and to change some of the activities of those five agencies. One of the agencies we feel can be consolidated and integrated within the board is the Occupational Disease Panel, because we feel this is a priority the board must focus on. We are planning to reinvest the money we save as a result of this restructuring and invest an additional \$7 million into research into why there's illness and injury in the workplace. The focus has changed. We're bringing everything together.

Mr Silipo: Minister, you're changing the focus all right. What you're saying to injured workers is that any claims they have with respect to compensation, they had better get used to the fact that you're going to put them even further back on the back burner.

No one is quibbling with you about efforts to improve rehabilitation efforts, but you can't do what you're doing. You can't claim, for example, that there's a crisis in the WCB finances when people see the facts. They see that the board has been operating at a surplus for three years in a row, which means a steady decrease in the unfunded liability, in addition to the actions we took as a government which brought down the unfunded liability. They see the current board chair wasting \$70,000 on a new washroom — and you talk about a crisis in funding. They see you cutting employer assessments by 5%, taking \$6 billion from injured workers and giving it to some of the wealthiest, most profitable corporations in this province.

You certainly are changing the focus, Minister, but that's exactly how you're doing it: You're taking benefits away from injured workers and putting money into the hands of employers. Now you're ramming this bill through without adequate public hearings. Why, Minister?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's unfortunate that you and the members of your party are continuing to mislead injured workers as to the intent —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister, you can't accuse another member of misleading. You must withdraw that.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I withdraw.

What is happening is that we are not satisfied with the direction your party or previous governments took. We are going to focus on prevention. In fact, we have set a target of a 30% decrease in lost-time injuries. We are going to try to meet that target and we're going to make sure we don't have the huge number of injured workers in the future.

We're also going to focus on safe and timely return to work. If some of those people who are injured today had had the opportunity to be returned to work in a safe and timely manner, they wouldn't be in the position they find themselves in today.

I can assure you that we have had ample debate. There will be an opportunity for further debate in June and over the summer, and we will respect —

The Speaker: Thank you very much. New question, third party.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Chair of Management Board and government House leader. A funny thing happened in the Legislature this morning. At about 11 o'clock the government House leader's parliamentary assistant tabled proposals for changes to the legislative rules and held a media conference. He told the media: "I'm just a backbencher. I'm just an individual member who is interested in some change. I'm proposing these changes and I'm anxious to hear feedback from all the members, and hey, I'm not speaking for the government." That was at 11 o'clock.

At 11:30 the government House leader sent us a letter announcing that Mr Baird had been appointed as the government representative on a committee to review his proposals. It goes without saying that Mr Baird was telling the truth this morning. My question is this: What happened between 11 and 11:30 to change your mind?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): There's a lot of time there.

The member for Nepean has come forward with a report that I hope will be considered carefully. To the member for Beaches-Woodbine and my other colleagues in the House, I hope it will be considered by each and every member of this House. Certainly in terms of the procedures, which as I understand were last looked at about five years ago, there are changes to the procedures I suspect we would all like to see.

Mr Baird has come forward with a report. I've asked Mr Baird if he would be our representative on a tripartite committee. I hope the Liberals will appoint a member and I hope the NDP will appoint a member. We certainly want input from the clerks and other members of this House. I hope we can come forward with a set of standing orders that allow this House to represent the people

and work for the people in a more superior fashion than it does today.

Ms Lankin: I can't quite believe that answer. You've already indicated to other House leaders that you were considering rule changes, and now to pawn this off on another member like you had nothing to do with it is quite astonishing.

To return to the press conference this morning, Mr Baird was repeatedly asked about the time lines for changes to the rules. Mr Baird insisted, and I'm quoting: "I haven't given the matter any thought. I'm just putting forward these proposals for discussion." However, you indicated in your letter today that you want the committee to be established today, to meet today and to respond by Thursday to the House leaders' meeting.

Of course it goes without saying that Mr Baird was telling the truth this morning. My supplementary question is this: When were you going to tell Mr Baird about these tight time lines, and does he agree with you that the rules should be changed by Thursday?

1410

Hon David Johnson: There have been no definite time lines set out. I have suggested in my letter that we act on this as quickly as possible. I'd like to see the parties talking about it. Surely we can talk about it in some fashion today if there's something to report by the House leaders' meeting, yes; that's what the House leaders' meeting is all about, to discuss matters that pertain to the House, and I hope we would have discussion. Indeed I would say that in some fashion at a previous House leaders' meeting we've already had a little bit of discussion about the need to look at the standing orders.

This is all about making this House work more effectively and efficiently for the people of Ontario, and I hope we would all endorse that. As I understand it, there are opportunities in there to allow individual members more opportunity to speak, maybe not at such great length, but more opportunities for individual members to have their bills considered. So there are lots of opportunities for the members and for the people of Ontario, and yes, I hope we get on and consider this.

Ms Lankin: That's a crock — the short bottom line. We know what your changes are about. Your changes are about —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Durham East, do you know what's out of order? You're out of order for being in the wrong seat and heckling. Order. I don't find "crock" out of order. "Crock" seems to be a perfectly in order statement. Order.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): A crock of what?

The Speaker: It could be a crock of soup. It could be a crock of all kinds of stuff.

Ms Lankin: Thank you, Mr Speaker. If I said what it was a crock of, I would be out of order.

We know what these rule changes are about. You thought there was too much debate on the megacity. You thought there was too much debate on your overhaul of education. You thought there was too much debate on the creation of a hospital restructuring commission. You're tired of hearing from people who don't agree with you,

and we're getting used to that from this government. Minister, I put it to you that in the past, government House leaders have either tabled rule changes in this House or proposed them at government or at House leaders' meetings or at both, and there's been a process of negotiation. Why are you changing the process here? Why are you pawning it off, letting someone else do your dirty work and insisting that members respond within two days?

You know there are substantial items here which impact on the democratic rights of members of the opposition. Your government has a reputation for being anti-democratic, using bully tactics. That's what's behind these rule changes. Substantial negotiations are required. Will you commit to that process of negotiation?

Hon David Johnson: First of all, this government is proud of the kind of debate it's had. I would say this government has had more public hearings, more public debate than any other government in the history of Ontario.

Ms Lankin: In the history of the universe, that's another crock.

Hon David Johnson: Whatever a crock is. I'll tell you that through the recommendations I've seen from Mr Baird, he wants the government to work as hard in this House as we're working through the committees. It's not all that complicated. In something of this nature there is the need for members from each party to roll up their sleeves and to work hard on the detail — I'm merely suggesting that Mr Baird is quite acquainted with the report — each party represent an individual, sit down, work together, and yes, then I am suggesting to come to the House leaders' meeting. As you indicated in your own initial question, I'd like to see it come first of all to the House leaders' meeting this week.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): My question is to the Minister of Health. The Wilson Heights area is home to the largest concentration of seniors located in Metro Toronto. In fact, this community is home for 32,000 seniors, of which about 75% are over the age of 75, many of whom live on or near the poverty line.

The Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations last Thursday expressed their concern for these 32,000 seniors who live in the catchment area of North York Branson Hospital, which your Health Services Restructuring Commission has ordered shut down in its entirety without any provision for any community-based health care. North York Branson Hospital's emergency department treated over 400 heart attack victims last year. The majority of these victims didn't come by car or ambulance, but came in because they lived in the neighbourhood. If Branson is closed, seniors with heart attacks will have to go by car or ambulance to the next nearest hospital, eight or 10 kilometres away.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Kwinter: Minister, now that you have established a health policy that totally disregards the needs of community health-based services, do you think —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for Wilson Heights. Minister of Health.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I appreciate the concerns being expressed by the honourable member on behalf of the people who live around Branson Hospital, many within walking distance. I know that the hospital itself and many interested individuals, including the Canadian Jewish Congress, have made submissions in this regard to the Health Services Restructuring Commission. I'm confident the commission will take into account the needs of all the people of Ontario, but in particular the needs of the people in Wilson Heights.

Mr Kwinter: Minister, as you so rightly mention, North York Branson Hospital is particularly sensitive to the specialized needs of the heavy concentration of Jewish seniors who live in the community. Many of these seniors are dependent on the provision of ethnoculturally sensitive services. The hospital has an onsite Jewish chapel, makes available Jewish holiday and ritual services, provides kosher meals and is accessible by foot, facilitating its use by observant Jews, patients, relatives and physicians. Do you think it's fair or reasonable to deprive a significant number of my constituents of this essential and specialized service?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again, I'm very sensitive to the needs of the people in that area, but I would say that I wonder if it was fair to close 11,000 hospital beds, many of them closed at the time the honourable member was part of the Liberal government in this province, to leave all that administration in place, to allow our waiting lists for cardiac surgery and dialysis, where frankly there weren't services for many, many people throughout this province, including people in urban centres, to allow our waiting lists for a number of services to increase over the years, and at the same time not do anything to restructure the health care system and get rid of the duplication and waste that nurses and many others have been telling us about over the years.

We've set up an arm's-length commission. They will make decisions that are in the best interests of the patients and will make sure every dollar gets spent on patient services, including the people of Wilson Heights who clearly are making the case of special needs, and I'm confident the commission will take that into consideration.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): This is a question for my good friend Monsieur Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This afternoon we will be debating your landlord protection act. As you know, all the members have heard stories in their ridings about problem tenants, tenants who have caused undue damage to the premises or who have interfered with the enjoyment of the premises by other tenants, who have seriously impaired the safety or other rights of another tenant, and who have knowingly misrepresented their income. Will your Tenant Protection Act make it easier for landlords to evict tenants who bring these types of problems with them?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): In response to the member and my good friend in the third party, it will allow the landlord to get rid of tenants who cause problems for other tenants. I think everybody would agree that you can have a tenant who can cause great disruption to a whole building and that the landlord has to carry the responsibility for that tenant, so there should be ways and means to ensure the protection and the wellbeing of the majority of the tenants. The landlord should have the tools made available to him to get an unruly tenant out as quickly as he possibly can.

Mr Marchese: I agree with what the minister has said, and I believe your government has already been served with a notice of eviction from the premises of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on all of those grounds and others. In fact, you've been asked by the Ontario Coalition for Non-Violent Action to vacate the premises by June 16, 1997. The question is this: Is your government planning to obey the eviction notice and leave peaceably or are you going to force the landlords, the people of Ontario, to take more drastic action to get you out?

Hon Mr Leach: A very interesting proposal. I think our landlords, the citizens of Ontario, will have an opportunity to review the facts, in a couple of years, as to whether this government has performed well, and I'm sure they will. If they choose to exercise one option or the other, I am positive they will do that. I'm sure when we put on the record the things we've done for all tenants in Ontario, they will sign a new lease for this government for another four years.

1420

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines. There has been discussion in this House in the past about the northern Ontario heritage fund. Specifically, I can recall some members questioning the time that was spent establishing a new mandate for the fund and whether any dollars would actually be committed to projects. Can the minister tell the House whether the heritage fund has actually made any commitments to northern projects?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): That's a good question. As the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay and all the members in the House will know, the heritage fund deals with infrastructure programs to help improve the northern economy in this province. We spent some time establishing a new mandate because there had been some criticism about how the money had been spent in the past. I was pleased to announce these new guidelines, the criteria for the heritage fund, last October, along with the Premier and the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, up in Timmins.

Since that time, the board members, who have been acting for \$1 a year —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The jackboots across the room.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for St Catharines, that's out of order.

Mr Bradley: What's out of order? The truth is out of order?

The Speaker: Member for St Catharines, I'm cautioning you. You must withdraw that comment.

Mr Bradley: Which comment, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker: The jackboots comment.

Mr Bradley: I will withdraw the jackboots comment.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Just in case anybody is watching this at home today, I want them to be fully aware that that withdrawal had nothing to do with the northern Ontario heritage fund.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I think it's best that we not comment back and forth any more.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know there are a lot of people in Ontario who are interested in the northern Ontario heritage fund and its benefits for creating new wealth and new opportunity in northern Ontario. I'd like to let the members of this House know that we're committed to spending, over the four years of our mandate, \$210 million in new money to be leveraged by the private sector and other partners for projects in the future. To date, the heritage fund has committed \$18 million in projects and has leveraged another \$25 million in partners' contributions.

Mr Grimmett: That certainly is good news for residents in northern Ontario. I've heard some rumours that some of the money that's going to be spent on this fund may even go towards health projects. I wonder if the minister can describe some of the projects that have been funded specifically in the north.

Hon Mr Hodgson: We've invested in a number of projects that are designed to help right across the north. We've announced \$2.4 million to support cancer care programs in communities throughout the north. We've announced \$240,000 to refurbish the Caribou Mountain fire tower in Temagami to enhance that important tourism component of their local economy. We've announced more than \$1 million towards marketing programs by the six northern Ontario travel associations. Money has also been committed to improve the fibre optics and telecommunications in communities such as Atikokan and Kenora. The heritage fund has approved money for about 30 projects throughout the north. These dollars will lead to real growth and real jobs, and we'll be continuing with this good news in future months.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the House leader. I'd like to ask a question on what I regard as a totally unacceptable and obscene package of rule changes your government tabled today. It is the ultimate bully tactic. You've tried to bully other people who disagree with you and the government, and now Mike Harris is putting in rules to try to bully and shut up the opposition. We find it completely unacceptable.

The question is to you, Minister — I can see Mike Harris's handprint all over this — because the member this morning said he had gone over these with you. He obviously went over these with you. Did you comment on

them and are you in agreement with this obscene set of rule changes?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): First of all, the government has not tabled rule changes today. The member for Nepean has spent a good deal of time in terms of looking through standing order changes because of a number of situations that have come up; for example, because of his desire that more members of this House get involved in the debate. A number of situations have arisen. He's addressed them. Yes, I've gone through the changes with him, and yes, I've commented on them. Some I'm certainly in favour of, and some I'm looking for comment on from the other parties. The process we've laid out involves comment from the Liberals and comment from the NDP. I hope that we can get together, that the three parties sit down, roll up our sleeves, have a look at this, discuss it in a House leaders' meeting and come up with standing order changes that allow for a more effective and efficient House.

Mr Phillips: The public watching this should recognize that it was a deliberate attempt to put it out today, with the federal election going on, because these rule changes are designed to gag the opposition. There's no other way to describe it. Frankly, I am ashamed of you, that you went over these rule changes and obviously are in agreement with them.

I want to ask you this final question: Will you withdraw this package that is designed simply to bully and silence the opposition? Will you do your job? Will you bring forward a set of rules that you want to propose and withdraw this set of unacceptable rule changes?

Hon David Johnson: We're a little high on the dramatics here today. I think the member for Nepean has done a very credible job of looking at the problems that are being faced.

The member for Nepean has issued his own report and I am suggesting that the three parties, along with the Clerk's department and other interested members and staff, should sit down and should have a look at that report. You may well have ideas. I know the former government had ideas. The former government twice tabled changes to the standing orders and made a review and an overhaul of the standing orders in 1992. This is not something that is uncommon for governments to do. We're taking initiative.

There's nothing before the House at this point in time. Let's take the opportunity to discuss it, get all our ideas into it and get something that allows this House to work in a better fashion for the people of Ontario.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): A question to the Minister of Housing: Your so-called Tenant Protection Act is the subject matter of your closure motion this afternoon, so your government's going to kill debate on the Tenant Protection Act. The timing is remarkable because tomorrow is the launch date of the 220-kilometre hike against hunger and homelessness. We all know that homelessness has become an ever-increasing problem in this province since the election of Harris and your Tories.

Please tell us how your Tenant Protection Act is going to protect tenants against homelessness once rents are no longer controlled.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It seems obvious to me that the member couldn't have read the bill, because the bill maintains rent controls, it keeps rent controls. As a matter of fact, it keeps exactly the same formula that was put forward by the previous government. The formula is there; rent controls are there; tenants are protected. When they move into a new apartment and negotiate a rent with the landlord, rent controls come on and they stay on as long as that tenant is in the unit, so I don't know where the member gets that we're getting rid of rent controls.

1430

Mr Kormos: It's a crock and the minister, quite frankly, is full of it.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): "Crock" was in order, but you've extended it now with the other comment. I think everyone knows that there are certain connotations attached to that comment. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr Kormos: I'm shocked. I didn't intend those connotations. I withdraw, Speaker.

Minister, the hike against hunger and homelessness that starts tomorrow is about the problems that are faced increasingly in this province by people who don't have a lot of choices; they don't have a whole lot of options. They don't have the money to pick and choose where they're going to live and under what conditions.

Your legislation is giving landlords the explicit right to discriminate on the basis of income. It's not just tenants and their advocacy groups. You've been told many times that among others, Keith Norton, head of your Ontario Humans Rights Commission, has condemned this section of your legislation. Minister, why won't you remove that section of the act to ensure that homelessness does not remain an ongoing problem here in the province?

Hon Mr Leach: Mr Norton, the head of the Human Rights Commission, wrote to us and asked us to reconsider the particular portion of the act that referred to incomes. I've responded to the Human Rights Commissioner and said that when we get this bill into committee and we have an opportunity to make amendments, we would certainly consider an amendment to that part of the bill. So I urge the members opposite to get on with second reading.

I certainly regret having to bring in a time allocation bill. If we had had cooperation from the parties opposite, we would have had this bill out to committee by now and the tenants and landlords in Ontario would have had an opportunity to put forth views and an opportunity to make changes such as this.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. I read in the Toronto Star today that in the next six to 10 years the auto assembly and component sector will be facing a skills shortage due to the retirement of up to 56,000 skilled workers. Could you explain what the government is doing to address this shortage?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): One of the reasons we have initiated a reform of our apprenticeship programs is because we can see, clearly in the auto sector and in other sectors, a need to have a better apprenticeship program in Ontario, so we have undertaken to do that now. I think the timing of the federal withdrawal from funding apprenticeship programs is unfortunate and regrettable, but we in Ontario are moving forward in that.

In secondary school reform we have clearly said that one of our objectives is to expand the cooperative opportunities that some 60,000 students are now engaged in that help them develop the skills and knowledge they need to get involved in the auto sector and other sectors. We also have had a keen interest in developing skills and technologies inside of our secondary school programs and that's part of our initiative.

We are also working with the colleges. For instance, in the most recent budget we extended the tax credits for cooperative programs with colleges and industry, again an attempt to make sure that our needs, from industry's point of view, are matched by what's going on in our colleges and in our schools.

Mrs Munro: Minister, you spoke of the need to update our programs to address these changes in the future. It's my understanding that last week you visited the Durham side of my riding. Having visited Durham College, could you give us any indication of their efforts to provide innovative programs that could assist in this impending skills shortage?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I had an opportunity last week to go to the first class to graduate from Durham College in a program that was designed to work in cooperation with the local school boards, with the federal government and the provincial government; a program that allowed students enrolled in a secondary school to attend the college, to pick up credits for their apprenticeship and complete the requirements for their high school diploma. Those students are well on their way both with the accreditation of a high school diploma and with the skills for those trades. This is a program designed by Durham College that will help all those students.

I also can point to a cooperation between St Clair College, the University of Windsor and Chrysler, which has just recently got back into the apprenticeship business and is working with the university and with the college to develop programs that will meet their needs and meet the needs of the students in Ontario. There's a lot of great work being done in our colleges.

ANTI-RACISM FUNDING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. Your government has worked hard to reverse all equal opportunity and anti-racism initiatives that have evolved in this province. You have eliminated employment equity and cut half the budget of the Ministry of Citizenship and all the anti-racism initiatives.

You have seen the vandalism that took place at the Munchy King restaurant in Scarborough. The culprits were motivated by racism. Tony McPherson opened a

small West Indian restaurant only four months ago, and when he arrived to open it one morning he found the back door pried open, dishes smashed, furniture broken, tablecloths ripped and racist hate messages spray-painted across the walls.

The hate crime was a deliberate and malicious attack on a business owned by a person of colour. What has your ministry done to counter these types of actions?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I know there is a police investigation ongoing with respect to this particular incident, so it would not be appropriate for me to comment on any details of that particular incident.

However, I can tell you that discrimination is against the law in this province and certainly the Ontario Human Rights Commission is the appropriate body to deal with incidents of discrimination. We are ensuring that the Ontario Human Rights Commission is strengthened by protecting funding for the commission. I can tell you that this government is committed to eradicating all forms of discrimination from this province.

Mr Curling: Madam Minister, how can you stand in your place and say to us that you are committed when you have cut the budget for the anti-racism, wiped it out, as a matter of fact? How can you stand there and say to me and to the people of the province that we do not need employment equity, and then say, "We are committed"? Those are words; we want action. People out there see that this government does not protect the most vulnerable in society.

Your Attorney General whispered to you about, "It's under investigation, so therefore my hands are tied." Your hands seem to be tied when it comes to protecting those who need it most.

I would say to you that it's about time you started acting like a minister to protect the most vulnerable in our society, people who are being attacked in a racist attitude. You sit there and say, "We are now committed to human rights." You have cut the budget there.

Tell me, Minister, what you intend to do about this situation that is rampant in this province.

Hon Ms Mushinski: I can tell you that we won't raise taxes 33 times, as was done by that government, and we won't raise taxes 32 times, as was done by the other government, who denied Ontarians more opportunities because of their tax-and-spend policies of the last 10 years. That's the reason we have deficits, that's the reason we don't have opportunities, and that's the reason we're reforming the Ontario Human Rights Commission so we can deal with the backlog, because we know that justice delayed is justice denied, which is something you did for 10 years.

1440

PAY EQUITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Minister of Labour. You have often said that you support the principle of pay equity. Your government has a very strange way of showing that. You've taken millions of dollars out of the pockets of the lowest-paid women; you've refused to pay money they are owed under the

law, even; and you've attacked the pay equity law itself under Bill 26, abolishing the proxy method of pay equity that was established under the NDP government.

Minister, will you stop pretending that you support pay equity and tell us today what you are really up to? The women of this province are worried and want to know.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): As the member opposite probably knows, we have conducted a review of the Pay Equity Act. Our objective is to ensure that we continue to have a pay equity system that is sustainable and will take us into the future. I would also indicate to you that this government has invested more money in pay equity than your government did.

Ms Churley: I wish we had more time to discuss that because — how shall I put this? — that is not my understanding of the amount of money this government has spent. I've asked the minister today to stop pretending on this issue —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for London North, that is not a proper statement to make. I ask you to withdraw.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I think you're stretching it, but I will withdraw it.

Ms Churley: The minister for women's issues should be sitting in her seat and supporting my question today, supporting me on pay equity for women, instead of sitting there, as always, defending this government taking away the rights of women in this province time after time. Shame on you, minister responsible for women's issues.

Minister of Labour, I'm asking you today to come right out and admit that you don't agree with laws guaranteeing fair pay for women. Instead of coming right out and repealing these laws, you're taking away women's rights bit by bit as part of other initiatives.

Last year there was this comprehensive review of pay equity laws that you talked about. Many of the recommendations would be destructive and your government shouldn't act on them. Will you commit today that you will not take away pay equity rights —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for Riverdale.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just again indicate to you that Mrs Read did a review, and we have personally indicated we are committed to the principles of pay equity. We have also committed to ensure that we continue with pay equity, that it is sustainable and that it is efficient. I would also indicate to you that this government invested \$500 million into the broader public sector for pay equity. That is the largest amount that any government has ever contributed to fund pay equity.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Reader's Digest recently named the Trans-Canada Highway between Kenora and Vermilion Bay as one of Canada's five most dangerous highways. Minister, I wondered what your response was to this dubious distinction.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): It isn't one that I'm very proud of, but I want the member and all Ontarians to know that this section of highway is a priority for our government and is scheduled for improvements.

The ministry will be reconstructing this entire section of highway in three major projects. Last year we announced that a \$6-million contract was awarded to improve the nine-kilometre section near Longbow Corners that was contaminated by PCBs in the late 1980s. This project will also be completed this summer, I might add.

The design for this section of road includes the realignment of the most difficult curbs, the widening of rock cuts and the construction of fully paved shoulders throughout. As well, a second contract to resurface 35 kilometres into the Vermilion Bay area is scheduled to be awarded later on this year.

As you can see, there is much work to be done and that is because of the neglect of the previous two governments, but we will commit to make sure that we spend the necessary dollars, even though —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Spina: In recent travels to northern Ontario as the parliamentary assistant to northern development, I noticed there were other northern highways in poor condition, but I also saw a number of construction vehicles, paving vehicles, going down the highway. Minister, I wondered if that's just sort of a blip on the radar screen, or can we look forward to these other highways being repaired as well?

Hon Mr Palladini: The improvement of northern Ontario highways is a priority for this government, as my colleague demonstrated a little while back. This year we have committed to spend \$141 million, the largest sum of money ever allocated for highway improvements in the north. In the budget, this government increased spending on northern highways by \$200 million over the next five years. That again shows our commitment. I want to say to the honourable member that other projects are also planned to improve this highway, and the increased funding accumulating in this year's budget over the next five years will certainly be spent on northern Ontario highways.

Again, I want to say that even though Ontarians contribute over \$2 billion a year through gas and fuel taxes to the federal coffers, not one dollar is being reinvested by the federal government in Ontario, and in particular on northern Ontario highways. I challenge Mr Martin and Mr Chrétien to give Ontario its fair share of those funds.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, independent consultants have shown that the restructuring commission has seriously overestimated the savings to be made on hospital closures and has underestimated the impact these closures will have on the communities they serve.

The public protest against the closing of the Montfort in my riding has been joined by many experts who say even the public's interest is at stake. Languages commis-

sioner Victor Goldbloom last week said that the closure or transfer of the only French-language hospital in Ontario would seriously jeopardize access to services for francophones in Ontario.

Minister, if the commission stands by its decision to close the Montfort, will you stand by your government's role as the protector of minority rights in this province? This is an easy question. All I need is a yes or a no.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member knows the answer, and that is, this government is fully supportive of the French Language Services Act and the protections it provides French-speaking people in this province, I think as good or better protections than we see throughout other parts of the country, and that's a real plus for Ontario.

The commission did make it clear and is making it as clear as it can in all of its public pronouncements I've heard that it very much respects and very much is keeping in mind the need to provide French-language services to the francophone community in Ottawa-Carleton.

I will make one correction to the honourable member's question, and that is, he talks about hospital closings as having something to do with saving money. From a government perspective, restructuring is not about saving money. I have never said that. None of my 82 colleagues have ever said that. It's about getting rid of waste and duplication in the system — what nurses have told us for years — reinvesting every penny and significantly more back into front-line services, more services for a growing and aging population. That's what it's about.

Mr Morin: Minister, I'm confused, as ever, whenever I ask a question to your minister for francophone affairs or when I ask a question to you. I still didn't get the answer that I really want to hear. It's really difficult to figure out where you stand on your own role in the restructuring exercise.

You claim an arm's-length relationship with the restructuring commission and yet your own deputy minister wrote to the commission to propose that the Montfort be absorbed into a new mega-hospital. It's hard to believe that her letter will not bear considerable weight, even when all the evidence suggests that her option is unworkable.

Your government has a responsibility to protect the interest of minorities. Minister, you have the power to reverse the decisions of the commission when the public interest is at stake. Will you admit that you do in fact have the ultimate say and will you promise to intervene, if necessary? Everybody counts on you.

1450

Hon Mr Wilson: The answer to that is contained in the law of this province, and that is the Minister of Health cannot contravene or override a directive from the Health Services Restructuring Commission. That is clear in the law. You are free to take that law and share it with your constituents so that they understand the process.

Also part of the process: Every member in this House, every citizen of this province, including the Ministry of Health, which is a party to the process and an interested party to the process has the opportunity during that 30-day period between interim decisions of the commission

and final directives of the commission to make a submission. I hope the honourable member took the opportunity during that period not to play politics but to come up with some data and facts to tell the commission what the right thing to do is in the Ottawa-Carleton area.

Again I say to the honourable member, the process is sealed in law and the honourable member should make himself aware of that law.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I am pleased to present hundreds of more names to add to signatures of concerned citizens in Ontario about drunk driving from Nepean, Manotick and Ottawa, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

I am happy to add my name to Ann Soucy, who collected these petitions, because I'm in complete agreement.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS AUX HÔPITAUX

M. Gilles E. Morin (Carleton-Est) : J'ai une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que la recommandation de la Commission de restructuration des soins de santé en Ontario ordonne la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort et que cette décision constitue le rejet de la volonté de l'entière communauté francophone de la province et de la communauté de l'est ;

«Attendu que 40 % des francophones de la province de l'Ontario résident dans l'aire de service de l'hôpital Montfort, soit à l'est de l'Ontario, où la population connaît un des plus hauts taux de croissance de toute la province, que le comté de Russell n'a pas d'hôpital et qu'en plus, Montfort dessert le nord de l'Ontario, où le nombre de francophones est très élevé ;

«Attendu que la fermeture de Montfort éloigne et diminue grandement l'accessibilité à une salle d'urgences pour plus de 150 000 personnes ;

«Attendu que Montfort est le seul hôpital enseignement et de formation des professionnels de la santé en français en Ontario et que la fermeture du seul hôpital spécialisé, offrant une gamme complète de services en français, mènera à la dilution et, éventuellement, à la disparition des services de santé en français en Ontario ;

«Attendu que l'on fait disparaître l'hôpital qui a un des meilleurs rendements de la province et qui, pour fins de comparaison, constitue l'exemple de choix du ministère de la Santé ;

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons que le premier ministre de la province intervienne fermement auprès de la Commission de restructuration des services de santé de l'Ontario afin que soit préservé l'emplacement actuel de l'hôpital et que soient consolidés la vocation, le mandat et le rôle essentiel que joue Montfort auprès de sa communauté.»

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I have a petition signed by 480 people to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, support our OPP, especially Sergeant Deane, in their testimony and actions taken at Ipperwash park;

"We believe all of the OPP acted properly in their line of duty."

RENT REGULATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas the Conservative government has brought forward Bill 96, legislation which will effectively kill rent control in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris Conservative campaign literature during the York South by-election stated that rent control will continue; and

"Whereas tenant groups, students and seniors have pointed out that this legislation will hurt those that can least afford it, as it will cause higher rents across most markets in Ontario; and

"Whereas this Conservative proposal will make it easier for residents to be evicted from retirement care homes; and

"Whereas the Liberal caucus continues to believe that all tenants, particularly the vulnerable in our society who live on fixed incomes, deserve the assurance of a maximum rent cap;

"We, the undersigned, demand that the Mike Harris government scrap its proposal to abandon and eliminate rent control and to introduce legislation which will protect tenants in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I'm in agreement.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by 3,000 people, and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, support our OPP, and especially Sergeant Deane, in their testimony and action taken at Ipperwash park;

"We believe all of the OPP acted properly in their line of duty."

TAXATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition. It reads like this:

"Whereas the Conservative Party has broken its promise that it would not close hospitals in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party said it would not introduce user fees and proceeded to introduce \$225 million in new user fees for seniors through the Ontario drug benefit plan; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that aid for the disabled would not be cut and proceeded to level millions of dollars in new user fees on the backs of the disabled; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised there would be no cuts to education and then proceeded to impose cuts which caused the cancellation of JK classes, the cancellation of special education programs and created larger classroom sizes; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party stated that there would be no cuts to law enforcement and then cut the budgets of Ontario police and courts by more than \$100 million; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that there would be no cuts to the environment and has broken the promise by firing environmental inspectors and cutting the budget which protects the environment by over \$100 million;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative Party to cancel the last stage of the tax scheme which benefits the wealthiest people in Ontario the most and restore funding for programs which protect health care, education, seniors and the environment."

I have affixed my signature to this in full agreement.

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It is my pleasure to present a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness;
 "Whereas abortion is not therapeutic;
 "Whereas abortion is never medically necessary;
 "Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require
 'elective procedures' to be funded;

"Whereas there is no right to publicly funded abortion;
 "Whereas it is the responsibility and the authority of
 the province exclusively to determine what services will
 be insured;

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is
 hazardous to women's health;

"Whereas the availability of abortion at public expense
 leads to the use of abortion as a means of birth control;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000
 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of
 Ontario as follows:

"That the government remove abortion as a service or
 procedure covered under the provincial health insurance
 plan."

I affix my name to this petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): "To the
 Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We are requesting that the Harris government not
 proceed with the proposed cuts to the child care system.
 These cuts will hurt children, parents, child care staff and
 local communities.

"Without standards, children will get lower-quality
 care. Without provincial funding for child care, regulated,
 non-profit child care services will collapse. Parents who
 want regulated care won't be able to access it. Parents on
 social assistance will be forced to enrol in workfare/
 learnfare programs or lose all their benefits. They will be
 left with no alternatives but to place their children in
 unsafe care. Communities also lose when jobs are lost
 and community investment disappears.

"The following voters are opposed to any cuts in
 licensed child care."

I affix my signature to this petition.

1500

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have yet
 another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto
 District Health Council hospital restructuring committee
 has recommended that North York Branson Hospital
 merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency
 and inpatient services currently provided by North York
 Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical
 care and the quality of health for the growing population
 which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who
 in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening
 medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to
 reject the recommendation contained within the final re-
 port of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council
 hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North

York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum,
 emergency and inpatient services."

I affix my signature to it.

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The petition
 is to the government of Ontario:

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and con-
 tinues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care
 services in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years
 as part of a rationalization of medical services in St
 Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional
 health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and
 oncology; and

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding
 in the health care field and requires more medical
 services and not fewer services; and

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to
 travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many
 specialized services that could be provided in city
 hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make
 difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to
 other centres; and

"Since the Niagara hospital restructuring committee
 used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommen-
 dations and was forced to take into account a cut of over
 \$40 million in funding for Niagara hospitals when
 carrying out its study; and

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older
 than that in most areas of the province and more elderly
 people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of
 Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike
 Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call
 upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close
 Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with
 the petition.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): "To the
 Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas black bear populations in Ontario are healthy
 with between 75,000 and 100,000 animals and their
 numbers are stable or increasing in many areas of the
 province; and

"Whereas black bear hunting is enjoyed by over 20,000
 hunters annually in Ontario and black bears are a well-
 managed renewable resource; and

"Whereas bear hunting replaces natural mortality and
 reduces cannibalism among bears; and

"Whereas hunting regulations are based on sustained
 yield principles and all forms of hunting are needed to
 optimize the socioeconomic benefits associated with
 hunting; and

"Whereas the value of the spring bear hunt to tourist
 operators in northern Ontario is \$30 million annually,
 generating about 500 person-years of employment; and

"Whereas animal rights activists have launched a
 campaign to ban bear hunting and end our hunting

heritage in Ontario, ignoring the enormous impact this would have on the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government protect our hunting heritage and continue to support all current forms of black bear hunting."

TAXATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The petition is to the government of Ontario:

"Whereas the Conservative Party has broken its promise that it would not close hospitals in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party said it would not introduce user fees and proceeded to introduce \$225 million in new user fees for seniors through the Ontario drug benefit plan; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that aid for the disabled would not be cut and proceeded to level millions of dollars in new user fees on to the backs of the disabled; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that there would be no cuts to education and then proceeded to impose cuts which caused the cancellation of junior kindergarten classes, the cancellation of special education programs, and created larger classroom sizes; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party stated that there would be no cuts to law enforcement and then cut the budgets of Ontario's police and courts by more than \$100 million; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that there would not be cuts to the environment and has broken this promise by firing environmental inspectors and cutting the budget which protects the environment by over \$100 million;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative Party to cancel the last stage of its tax scheme, which benefits the wealthiest people in Ontario the most, and to restore funding for programs which protect health care, education, seniors and the environment."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

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"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North

York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WATERLOO AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE DE WATERLOO

Mr Leach moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend the Regional Municipality of Waterloo Act and to make consequential amendments /
Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la municipalité régionale de Waterloo et apportant des modifications corrélatives.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing or special order of the House relating to Bill 96, An Act to Consolidate and Revise the Law with respect to Residential Tenancies, when Bill 96 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on general government;

That the standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet to consider the bill at its regularly scheduled meeting times during the weeks of June 9, 16 and 23;

That the standing committee further be authorized to meet to consider the bill for eight days during the summer recess;

That all amendments be tabled with the clerk of the committee by 5 pm seven calendar days following the final day of consideration during the summer recess;

That the committee be authorized to meet to consider the bill for two days of clause-by-clause during its regularly scheduled sessional meeting times; and that the committee be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment on the second day until completion of clause-by-clause consideration;

At 5 pm on the second day of clause-by-clause deliberations, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 128(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the commencement of the second day of clause-by-clause consideration or no later than the first sessional day in November, whichever is earliest. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

1510

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on general government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, which question shall be decided without debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That one sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:45 pm on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes and no deferral of any division pursuant to standing order 28(g) shall be permitted.

I'm pleased to address the House on the importance of this time allocation motion, which lets us start extensive public hearings on Bill 96, the Tenant Protection Act. This proposed legislation takes a seriously flawed system of rent regulation and improves it for the benefit of all tenants, property owners and taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

We've identified the problems. We know that more than \$10 billion in repair is needed to rental buildings. We know there are apartment buildings across this province that are poorly maintained. We know there is little or no investment in rental housing. We know that vacancy rates in many cities are low, leaving tenants with few choices about where to live.

We consulted extensively and we heard tenants suggest imposing the strictest rent controls imaginable, leaving property owners with no chance to break even, let alone make a profit. We heard property owners suggest eliminating the entire rent control system and all the regulations that go with it, leaving tenants totally unprotected. We left the extremes of both of these positions behind and introduced legislation that found a balanced middle ground, a balanced, fair and equitable act.

We had several objectives: We wanted to protect tenants from unfair rent increases; we wanted to improve maintenance and get tough on landlords who fail to take care of their buildings; we wanted to create a climate where people would invest in rental real estate; and we wanted to streamline the administration and create a faster, fairer system. We introduced legislation to address these objectives and we can't afford to wait any longer.

This time allocation motion is needed to move us through the legislative process. Our consultation has been extensive. We listened and we met with the tenant and landlord organizations as well as many other groups, including home builders, developers, social housing agencies and care home providers. We listened to their ideas and suggestions, and created a paper called Tenant

Protection Legislation: New Directions for Discussion, which was released in June of last year. It outlined our proposed policy direction and asked for suggestions and comments.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Would you ascertain whether there is a quorum?

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Clerk, is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): Quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: Quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: To help gain the widest possible input, last summer we held extensive public hearings across the province. We travelled to Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie, Ottawa, Windsor, Hamilton, Peterborough, Kitchener and London as well as the hearings we held right here in Toronto. In total, we heard from more than 100 groups and individuals on rental issues and we received more than 200 carefully thought-out written submissions.

All this information, all this input was taken into account when we crafted Bill 96. It is now time to consult further. We believe it is important to move on to the committee stage and receive even more public comment on our proposed reforms. This time allocation motion would let us do exactly that. However, I would like to forestall any comment from the opposition parties that it indicates that we are trying to rush through debate on Bill 96. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As I have said, we have already held weeks of public hearings on our discussion paper and we have already held three full days of second reading debate. I'm sure the members opposite would agree that public input is extremely important to producing the best bill possible.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): But you didn't listen before, or maybe Mr Turnbull is going to listen now.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, come to order.

Hon Mr Leach: We are eager once again to consult, to listen and to hear that public viewpoint.

We have already given this very important issue more debate than either of the two opposition parties gave their own rental legislation. The NDP, when debating Bill 121, felt only one day of debate in the House was sufficient. The two pieces of rental legislation introduced by the former Liberal government, Bill 11 and Bill 51, had a total of four hours of debate at second reading.

Ms Lankin: Al, don't you realize you can only do that if the opposition doesn't want to speak?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine, come to order.

Hon Mr Leach: This government has had double the number of hours for second reading than the opposition bills combined.

This time allocation motion allows the opposition one day for third reading. This is the same amount of time that was spent on the Liberals' Bill 51 and the same number of hours spent by the NDP on their Bill 121.

It is important to remember that the former governments of both my Liberal and NDP colleagues used time allocation motions on a regular basis. The NDP government used time allocation 23 times in its term, a high number when you consider that they didn't sit at all in the last year of their mandate. As a matter of fact, it was the NDP that created the time allocation standing order that we're using today.

The members of the third party have no credibility whatsoever when they say they do not want to try and delay the process. Indeed, they wasted millions of dollars and about 10 days of House time during their ill-conceived filibuster of Bill 103.

This House is very aware of the opposition's position on Bill 96. What is important now is to have the opportunity to go out and talk to tenants, talk to property owners and get their input, because this proposed legislation is for them.

Some economists believe that rent controls do not protect tenants. The Todd report, which I know you're very familiar with, Madam Speaker, found that most rent control units are close to market levels at the present time. Keeping rents artificially controlled protects the unit; it does not protect the tenants. We believe it should be the other way around. Our legislation will protect the individual, not the unit.

All tenants will be covered by the annual guideline increase and many other protections that they currently enjoy, but when they vacate the unit, the landlord and the new tenant will negotiate a new rent. That rent will also be capped by the annual guideline increase. In this way we will protect the tenants while allowing the market to maintain a fair rental level. This, along with all the other measures, will encourage better-maintained buildings, new supply and more jobs.

During the second reading debate, I know that my friends in opposition mentioned the Russell report. They stated that landlords have received an average of 10% return on their investment over the past number of years. I want to take the opportunity to clarify the record.

My colleagues opposite failed to mention that the Russell report is statistically invalid due to the small sample size: Only six buildings were examined. As a matter of fact, the authors of the Russell report wrote to us in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to inform us that it would be totally inaccurate to use their report to predict any type of financial return, and they were shocked that the members of the opposition would even think to do so.

In conclusion, the government has brought forth this time allocation motion in order to be very clear about our intentions with this piece of legislation. We are clear about the need for extensive public hearings. We are clear about the need for discussions with all interested parties. And we are clear about the need to improve the rental housing legislation in Ontario for the benefit of the tenant, the property owner and the Ontario taxpayer.

1520

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Madam Speaker, I ask for permission to share my time with the member for Windsor-Walkerville and the member for Scarborough North.

The Acting Speaker: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr Bradley: I find interesting, first of all, the particular day that we are dealing with this piece of legislation, with the time allocation which rams through the end of rent control in Ontario. I suspect that there are a lot of people out there who don't know that this government is ending rent control. I suspect the developers know. I suspect those who own the huge apartment complexes in Toronto and other places know, and that they were there at the Tory fund-raiser to applaud this legislation. But I suspect that there are a number of senior citizens, a number of students, a number of vulnerable people and a number of people who don't fit any of those categories who are not aware that in fact the government today is bringing an end to rent control in this province. That is unfortunate.

If the government were upfront, if the government said in its platform, "We're here to end rent control; this is what we are going to do," and they spelled it out at the beginning, we could still oppose it in opposition with some considerable virtue, but it would at least be a situation where the government was not trying to sneak something through. Here the government is on election day, when the Legislative Assembly has normally not been in session and members have been in their constituency offices or being able to vote in their constituencies — of course, the government portrays it somewhat differently.

I read an account where the government House leader — they like to use this, and it is a misinterpretation. I thought of another word, but you can't use it in the House. It's a misinterpretation of the rules of this House or of what is really going on. The government House leader says, of course, "We're going to make members work like everybody else." Funny thing, though. Last Thursday and the Thursday before, in the House leaders' meeting, they said, "If only you people in the opposition will simply let this bill go through without any further debate, then we will not be sitting next Monday." So much for the nonsense of the government House leader pretending that this had anything to do with so-called working on election day. It had everything to do with the fact that the government wanted to get this bill through as quickly as possible so people didn't see the ramifications of it.

Here the government is, ending rent control. You know, I can remember that a lot of senior citizens in this province were attracted by certain portions of the Conservative program. When they were out putting the boots to the people on welfare or people receiving social assistance, when they were misconstruing legislation passed by a previous government and saying, "No quotas," and trying to set that out to inflame people — by the way, those little signs were there in the last week of the election campaign, if anyone is wondering where the Reform Party got the idea for those little inflammatory messages that appear on signs. The Conservative Party did that. The Mike Harris party did that in the last provincial election.

Some of those seniors might have been attracted by some of the policies and pronouncements of the Conservative Party, but little did they know that they would be

paying part of the cost of their prescriptions, for instance, and that in fact the government would be interpreting one year when only nine months had gone by and requiring them to pay once again. I'm sure most of those seniors didn't know that rent control is going to end for any senior citizens or others who move from one apartment to another in this province. So people will in effect, if they want to avoid those kinds of increases, be prisoners in their own home.

If this bill were dealing with some genuine problems out there for landlords, then one would say the Legislature would consider it perhaps with some sympathy. I can't think of anybody who doesn't feel sorry for a landlord who owns a fourplex or a sixplex who has a tenant who refuses to pay; who has a tenant who destroys the property that is there; who has a tenant who is disruptive to others. Everybody in the Legislature wants to see that the good tenants are treated appropriately and that those who are not good tenants are subject to the recourse of the law.

But that's not what this bill is about. That's not what this bill is about at all. This bill is about caving in to the big developers in this province. There are a lot of small landlords who own small properties in this province who have encountered some problems, and I think people are sympathetic to trying to rectify those problems. What they're not sympathetic to is simply caving in to the huge developers who put pressure on this government, and that's what they've done. Seniors in this province who may be watching this afternoon will be alarmed to know that this Conservative-Reform government that we have in Ontario is in fact going to end rent control for them.

Second, and as insidious, is the provision that there is going to be much easier conversion from what we call rental properties, the huge rental properties, to condominium properties. That's most unfortunate, because that's going to reduce the amount of rental stock in the province. The theory that the minister puts forward that somehow rental stock will increase because everybody is now going to go out and build apartment buildings is simply not going to hold water.

The second reason it won't is that people really don't believe that subsequent governments won't possibly reimpose rent control. If that's the reason they're talking about, if they think they're going to generate more rental housing in this province, they are not. In fact, we are going to have fewer rental units in this province for people who require them than we had before.

Seniors, many of whom are on a fixed income, are going to be stuck with huge increases in rents as the market tightens. Students, who must move almost yearly because of their educational requirements, often cannot afford to keep the apartment for the summer months, three or four months in the summer, they too are going to be hit by this and they are going to see their costs increase at the very time that this government has drastically increased tuition fees for people in this province, again bringing about a situation where the rich and the privileged will be fine, thank you, but people of modest income will not enjoy the same privileges and the same rights as others. I consider that to be most unfortunate.

So when I look at this bill, I see this bill as a deception. The bill itself is a deception. I can't say anything about the people who are doing it because, as I say, the rules do not permit that, and I don't want to do that in any event.

Lauren, from St Catharines-Brock, has just provided me with a drink of water — thank you, Lauren — to allow for a little more discussion of this.

So it's most unfortunate, but I think it is instructive to note that it's on election day when they are hiding behind this. You see, if you want to judge a government, you judge a government based on what it does when nobody is looking, or when it thinks nobody is looking, and today, naturally, attention in the political field is diverted to the federal field because there is a federal election on today. So members of the news media are not here in great numbers and the public is probably preoccupied with other items, justifiably so, today. And when it feels it has no attention, the government sneaks through an end to rent control, killing rent control in this province. On the same day, it tries to slip in some rule changes to the Legislative Assembly.

Now the extreme right-wingers, such as my friend the member for Scarborough East, who would like to change the rules of this House so you run it like a virtual dictatorship, are going to be pleased with this. He's going to say, "Aren't we smart. Aren't we clever. If we put this through today, we can have a smirk as wide as our faces on it." But you know, some of the people on the government benches who have served in opposition, or some who simply have a high regard for the democratic system, are going to be very disturbed with the proposals that you see before us today.

The member should know that when this happens we should have as many members in the House as possible, and that's why I'm wondering if we have a quorum at this time. Would you check?

1530

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay appropriately notes that the Reform Party is in some trouble in Muskoka-Georgian Bay without him there to run the campaign, as he did in the last federal election. I know he was very instrumental in that regard. The people in Muskoka-Georgian Bay who are Reformers should know that the member is here today. I don't know if there's some wavering in support and he's going over to the Tories now, but something is happening there. My friend the member for Scarborough East will be helpful in letting me know what happens.

What we're seeing happening today, by the way, in terms of the rules, and this is part of the rules we have today, we're dealing with a time allocation motion. The government doesn't want any more debate on the rent control abolishment legislation, so it has decided it's going to pass a motion this afternoon, which by virtue of its majority it can always carry, to terminate that debate. The purpose of the debate is to allow the public to know

what the issues are surrounding a piece of legislation. It is a very valuable tool for the opposition to use to make certain the public is aware of the ramifications of all the provisions of a piece of legislation.

I know there are members in the government benches who have sat in opposition who must be very concerned in their heart of hearts about the proposals we've seen through the auspices of the member for Nepean. I don't for a moment believe that the member for Nepean drew up these proposed rule changes. The member for Nepean was in fact used by the Premier's office and apparently is prepared to comply, because he has put his name to this. But make no mistake about it: The rule changes in procedure in this House that this government wishes to implement came from the Premier's office; they came from those very clever people who are not elected, who didn't have to go to the polls, who are so very clever, because they go down to meet with Newt Gingrich and the Republican guard down in the States and they all exchange stories about how clever they are and how clever they can be in dealing with the Legislature.

It seems to me that if you begin to roll the tanks over the rights of the opposition in this Legislature, then democracy is the loser. You can pass a lot of bills, you can pass a lot of motions, you can change a lot of policies, but what has ramifications for the long term are changes to the rules of this House. One of the unfortunate aspects of rule changes, one aspect that I think is important, is that you must know that future governments will not change the rules back.

I would like to be able to stand in this House and say that if one of the opposition parties were elected in the next election, these rules would be changed back to the way they are or made more accommodating to the opposition. I've never seen that happen yet. That simply does not happen. That's why members of the government who really care about the democratic process should be very wary of these kinds of rule changes.

The last government that was in power made some significant changes to the rules. It now has to live with those. It means that those of us in opposition even today have fewer opportunities and rights than was the case previous to those rule changes. I remember that those of us who were opposed to those rule changes warned the government members of the day that they would rue the day they allowed those changes to take place.

Another clever thought in the minds of the people who advise the Premier is, "Well, don't worry, Premier, because the news media won't be interested in these," because the reporters will go to their editors and say: "Well, what does this mean to the people outside of this House? Why should people outside of the Legislative Assembly care about the rule changes anyway?"

Well, they are extremely important. They're important to the process. I go back to Bill 26, a mammoth, massive government bill that some referred to as a bully bill. The reason they called it a bully bill was because it concentrated so much power in the hands of unelected officials and in the hands of a very few cabinet ministers. The government was prepared to ram that bill through before Christmas, and certainly had the majority to do so, and even under the existing rules was able to do so. The

opposition had to take extraordinary action to prevent the government from doing so, had to in effect bring the Legislature, for a temporary period of time, to a halt so there could be appropriate discussions and a way found to process the bill with the necessary input from the public.

The question wasn't whether the government had the right to pass the bill; it did. The question wasn't whether the government had the majority to pass the bill; it clearly had a massive majority to pass the bill. The question was about a bill which dealt with about 48 different acts of the Legislature, a massive, as we called it, omnibus — and some people called it ominous — bill that was going to take away from elected members of the Legislature, the only people the public can get at, and give massive powers to unelected members of the Premier's staff. That's why we in the opposition saw this as being a very important piece of legislation to receive further consideration.

I wonder how many government members like the fact that the bill created a so-called hospital restructuring commission, a commission that is now going from municipality to municipality in the province closing hospitals despite the fact that Premier Harris, as Conservative leader in May 1995, during the leaders' debate said, "Certainly I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." Then we see the government elected and they bring in Bill 26, a massive bill which gives to the hospital restructuring commission the power to walk in and close hospitals in every community in Ontario, clearly a provincial responsibility and clearly one which was created by this bill.

The bill was going to pass before Christmas, and again, this government has a knack of being able to find times when they think the public is not really listening to try to put through controversial legislation. But the opposition prevented that and caused hearings to be held in various municipalities across Ontario as well as here at the Legislature, extensive hearings which resulted in the government itself making 150 amendments to its own bill. There's a bill that would have gone through virtually unamended if it were not for the action of the opposition, extraordinary as it was, to prevent the Legislature from proceeding with that legislation.

I know we've got some people in here from the business sector, where they simply snap their fingers in their small business and they're able to get what they want. Maybe that's the way it should be in their business. I don't object to that. That's a different venue; it's a different circumstance. I think things always work best when you consult the people with whom you work and when you look at the ramifications of what you're doing. But it's a different circumstance to be dealing with the private sector and private business than it is with public business before this House.

I think truly thoughtful members of the government caucus will look at the proposed changes and think about the fact that some day they might be in opposition, or not even think about that but think: "Is this wise for the democratic process? Can we not wait a few more days? Can we not sustain perhaps what we don't like as inconvenient actions by the opposition just a little longer to get

the legislation through, to allow it to be subjected to more scrutiny?" If it requires changes, perhaps some of the government members will quietly make those recommendations to the government and say, "You know, the opposition has a point here; I'm not going to get up in the House as a government member and embarrass the government, but I think they've got a point," and go to the Conservative caucus meeting and say, "We think these changes should be made."

1540

Without that kind of opportunity for the opposition, this will not happen. Will the House be more efficient for the Premier's staff? It will. Will Guy Giorno be happier? He will. Will Tom Long be delighted? Most certainly. Will all the people who advise the Premier think this is good? Yes, they will. But it's not good for the democratic process.

That's what we're elected to do, to deal with things democratically. It's sometimes cumbersome. I don't want to be so profound or historical as to quote extensively Winston Churchill, but we all recall what Winston Churchill said in criticizing the democratic system, that it was cumbersome and far from perfect, but it was the best system we had.

There are many countries in the world that have much more efficient parliaments than we have; there are many jurisdictions that have more efficient parliaments. But I don't think they provide better government to the people they represent as a result of the —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat for a moment. Order, please. Could I ask the members of the House to come to order, please. It's just far too noisy. The noise level has gone right up.

Mr Bradley: When these matters of changing the democratic system, these matters of bringing in rent control termination are not discussed during an election campaign, one becomes worried. The public may react to some inflammatory statements that are made, some easy slogans, some so-called hot button issues that make us immediately angry. But they must always look, when voting — whether it's a provincial, federal or local election, but it applies most particularly federally and provincially — at the entire package. You can't simply cherry-pick. You can't simply say, "I like this one because it's going to get those criminals" or "I like that one because it'll teach those French people in Quebec something." You can't do that.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Be careful.

Mr Bradley: You have to be careful, as the member for Lake Nipigon says.

Mr Pouliot: And a former Quebecker.

Mr Bradley: And a former Quebecker, as he notes.

You've got to watch that because you've got to look at what else is in the package. While you may be angry on a particular day, as I think many people were in June 1995, angry enough to elect a government which pushed some hot buttons for them — one of the hot buttons was not rent control. Nobody mentioned to the people I know, the seniors I know, that the government would be ending rent control for anybody who had to move or chose to move from one rental accommodation to another, or

make it easier for developers to convert their massive buildings from rental accommodation which was approved by the municipality to what we call condominiums, which of course is a different circumstance that some who live in those rental buildings could not afford.

This government is essentially in so many instances catering to the rich and the privileged in the province, and dividing the province so those at the very top economically are going to be much better off than those at the bottom. We cannot guarantee as a Legislature, we cannot guarantee as parliamentarians that everyone is going to be able to drive a Cadillac, that everyone's going to live in a \$5-million home, that everyone's going to be able to take a vacation in Aruba or Switzerland, but one thing we can do is guarantee that there's a reasonable social safety net, that the most vulnerable people in our society are protected by legislation and regulations passed by this House and by the cabinet. That is our role; that is our responsibility.

The rich and the privileged can look after themselves. They have the wherewithal; they have the money; they have the position; they have the power. This is not to say that one should ignore what any segment of society has to say or the needs of any segment of society, but the people in the category I've described are by and large able to look after themselves. This government is increasing the gap between the richest people in the province and the poorest people in the province.

We will all pay that consequence — not just a few people; everyone will pay that consequence — because as the people on the bottom economic rung become more desperate, as they see that they are unable to cope with the circumstances they face, as they see some people getting richer and richer and richer while their lot is not increased measurably or may decrease, they are going to increasingly be desperate enough to turn to other ways of advancing themselves. Some of those ways may not be legal and some of those ways may not be ethical, but while one will never be able to condone those circumstances where people take the law into their own hands or break the law, one would certainly then understand, as this government increases the gap between the rich and the poor, what is happening.

It is important. Today is another day that we are voting, but in thinking of 1995, it's important that one look at all of the package when you have people out there proposing things to you that sound very attractive. We saw an example of that the other day when a bill was introduced by a Conservative member of the Legislature which would in effect remove the Rand formula. In other words, it was a piece of legislation, the Rand formula provisions, brought in by a Conservative government, a pretty moderate, middle-of-the-road, slightly-right-of-centre Conservative government. A newly elected Conservative member of the Legislature was bringing in a law that would have drastically changed labour laws in this province to the detriment of unionized workers in Ontario.

Probably many of those unionized workers voted for the candidates for this government because they liked some of the issues they talked about. One always has to look at that and say: "What is behind the open-necked

shirt? What is behind the denim? What is behind the down-home discussions and way of speaking?"

Mr Pouliot: A very mean government.

Mr Bradley: It's a very mean government, as suggested by my friend the member for Lake Nipigon. Very often one must look carefully at the entire platform of parties that appear to be attractive and work to make us angry against the system or against other people in our society. If they had looked in 1995, they would have found rent control being abolished by this government, although they would have had to have a magnifying glass to find any particular reference to that in this government's platform. They would have to look at the major changes to labour legislation.

As I say, while I don't agree with some of the government legislation which is brought in, if it was clearly in the platform — my friend the member for St Catharines-Brock and I have been on some platforms together, where he has presented the government's point of view and I an opposition point of view, and we allow people to make the choice. Where he has said to people, "Here is what we said in our platform. Here's what we propose. Here's what we're doing," then the debate isn't over, "You didn't say you were going to do that," the debate is over whether that's valid to do that. That's a fair debate. He makes his case and I make my case and the audience has a chance to choose. That's a good democratic process. We both enjoy doing that, I'm sure, making those points to people. There are occasions when sometimes it's probably not as amicable as we would both like.

When the government didn't mention something or hid it somewhere and then it appears as government policy, that's when there's justification for making the kind of accusation we have today, that here on election day the government's doing two things: (1) hiding its rent-control-ending legislation, trying to spirit it through the House this afternoon with a time allocation or closure of debate motion, and (2) proposing drastic and totally unacceptable changes to the rules of procedure of this House, which I think would severely damage the system we have.

I should say as well that the amount of consultation is important. I know to some members it appears to be irrelevant. What concerns me a lot is that governments — I'll put it in the plural and I'll make it generic — tend to go out and conduct public hearings and not often reflect what they heard in those public hearings. It's probably a misuse of the committee system to do that, but I still think it's important, even if governments don't have that intention, to allow people their day in court. I know it takes a little more time.

1550

I think of the Workers' Compensation Board legislation. I got a call from people in St Catharines who wanted to be able to make representations somewhere in the Niagara region. St Catharines is the largest community and probably a reasonable place. The government has allocated only six days for public hearings on its Workers' Compensation Board bill. I know there was some consultation that Mr Jackson, the member for Burlington South, conducted with people, and that was on some general ideas, but here we have a specific bill.

When a government comes in and says, "You have six days to make representations on major changes," that's just too quick.

You've got a five-year mandate. You haven't even completed two years yet. If you want to brag — people in government do brag and there's nothing wrong with that — about what you're doing, and I make this in reference to the proposed rule changes, you've probably passed more legislation, with the rules that exist, since you've been in government than any other government in that period of time. Yet you've got somebody who wants to ingratiate himself to the Premier allowing his name to be placed on rule changes to this House. You have passed that legislation. I may disagree with some of it, others in society may disagree with some of it, but there's no question you've passed it and there's no question that as a government you're entitled to do so. We hope to persuade you, when you are wrong, that you are wrong. That's part of the process. Perhaps you'll agree sometimes, most of the time you likely won't agree, but that's what this process is about.

I am deeply disturbed when I see the provisions of the rent control legislation that we see here. As I mentioned previously — some of the other members have alluded to this during the debate — we all recognize that some of the smaller landlords have had some problems and I think people are sympathetic to addressing those. That's who you will trot out. You'll say, "What about the poor landlord?" and we'll say, "Indeed. What about the person with a sixplex out there who has someone who is wrecking the apartment and won't pay the rent and is disruptive?"

Nobody here is sympathetic to that, I can assure you of that. They're sympathetic to the landlord in that circumstance. If you can fix legislation which would help those landlords out, I think you'd find a pretty good consensus in this House. But if you stick it in as part of a package that abolishes rent control when someone wants to move from one rental residence to another, then it's not going to receive that support. That's really what this is all about.

You're really going to put people at the mercy of an ever-constricting market. In some communities you won't notice a difference immediately. I hear people say, "In my municipality the vacancy rate is higher than it's been for a while," but when you allow these condominium conversions, from rental to condominium accommodation, and when the market generally tightens, because I don't see people running out, with this legislation, to build new rental accommodation, then you're going to see those rents increase substantially.

This is not, as you characterize it, a tenant protection package; this is a developer protection package. These policies do not strengthen rent control; they in effect end rent control. Everything that knowledgeable tenants who have been watching the situation have feared about this government is now coming true.

We intend to fight this through the committee process, through third reading, hoping to persuade the government to abandon this unfortunate and unwise initiative.

Mike Harris made two promises, as I recall, to Ontario's three million tenants: (1) rent control will con-

tinue, and (2) any reforms he would bring to rent control would result in lower rents for tenants. This package in effect breaks both of the Premier's promises.

The spin doctors, the government relations people, the people who are paid well by the government to put out the government message are sometimes successful in putting this out. They like to say, "One thing you can say about this government is they're doing what they said they were going to do." In some instances that's the case, but they've broken a lot of promises. I defy anybody on the government benches to tell me how Mike Harris keeps his promises through this piece of legislation.

Remember those two promises to Ontario's three million tenants: (1) rent control will continue — in fact it will not; if anyone moves out of an apartment, rent control is gone — and (2) any reforms he would bring to rent control would result in lower rents for tenants. That remains to be seen. I doubt that very much, if we look at the five-year period ahead.

The area of great concern to those of us in opposition is the element of the package that removes rent control from an apartment when it becomes vacant. Simply put, when a tenant moves out of an apartment the landlord can raise the rent on the apartment as high as the landlord wishes. It's called vacancy decontrol. Because the incentive is going to be there, it can lead to where in some of the huge buildings the landlord will intimidate tenants and the tenants will become prisoners in their own apartments.

With approximately 20% of tenants moving each year, vacancy decontrol will see a gradual rise in overall rent levels. It is the method of the Conservative-Reform government, as I call you over there, of killing rent controls, and it's the back-door way of doing it. It's not even up front. It's not even saying it straightforwardly to people; it's doing it through the back door, which is most unfortunate.

You claim, as a government, at least your minister does, that the policy will result in more apartments being built and an overall improved level of maintenance in buildings, yet we have no research at all provided by the government to prove that this will be the case. In fact vacancy rates in cities like Toronto today are only one-half of a percentage point below the level they were before rent controls were put in place 20 years ago by the Conservative government of Bill Davis.

Clearly you people did not listen to tenants when you drafted this policy. During the consultations scheduled in the summer, we want to ensure tenants are informed of the harm in this policy and make sure you hear tenants' concerns loudly and clearly.

Tenants are being done in by this group of Conservatives who sit in the House today. I suspect with the Davis government this wouldn't have happened. We had a more moderate complexion to the government in those days.

Indeed I was just thinking today how some of the government House leaders over the years — I think of my friend Bob Welch, the member for Lincoln at one time and then St Catharines-Brock. He was government House leader and he was a man who recognized the needs of the opposition and the importance of democracy. I wonder what Bob Welch would think of this package. Tom

Wells, a very accommodating individual, easy to work with, wanted to know how the views of the opposition could be accommodated. I see his photograph in the government House leader's office and I know he must be concerned in his heart of hearts when he hears how the government is going to severely restrict even further the opportunities for members of the opposition to make their case.

Some people believe the debate that takes place in the House is frivolous, time-consuming, and some would even say a waste of time, but you have to remember it often takes a little while for the public to become accustomed to and aware of the provisions of pieces of legislation. The Conservative Party, in opposition, utilized that. The Conservative Party, in opposition, used the time available in the House and the rules that were available to draw to the public's attention matters of concern to them when there was an NDP government in power and a Liberal government in power. Yes, members on the government benches, I can remember some of my colleagues when we were in government as the Liberal Party, particularly the newly elected members who had never sat in the House, expressing their frustration and impatience with the opposition; and yet, as an individual who had had that experience previously, I would explain the process the opposition was going through and why ultimately it was beneficial to the legislation and to the people we serve in the province, because we would have a full canvassing of those issues.

1600

I ask people out there when they are looking, as they did in 1995, at the platform of a government when it comes out with a few hot-button issues, when it gets you angry with certain groups in our society, when it has some simplistic and simple answers to complicated issues, to look beyond the veneer, look beyond the curtain to see what is lurking behind. What agenda is there behind which will affect ordinary people in this province, the average person in this province? If you do so and you cast your ballot knowing that, that's quite valid.

I suspect that during the last election, people who lived in apartments and are surprised by what's happening today, that category of person who lives in a rental accommodation and is surprised by this piece of legislation, may not have read the full platform or questioned the government members when they were opposition people running for office, or they would have known what this government was going to do to tenants across this province by abolishing rent control.

I know my colleague from Windsor-Walkerville, who has done considerable work on this legislation, who delivered an excellent speech on it previously in the House and has directed pointed questions to the minister, will want to elaborate further on the provisions of this bill and the reasons why we in the Liberal Party are opposed to the abolishing of rent control that the Conservative government of Mike Harris is going through at this time.

I hope as well that members and the public will remember that this is being done, slipped through, sneaked in the back door, on election day when people are occupied with something else. If you're proud of it, do it up front. If you think it's the right policy, announce

it on a day when everybody can see and hear it. I go back to a point of judgement. I always like to judge governments on what they do when they think nobody is looking, because that's the true agenda of a government. If they're prepared to do it up front, if they're prepared to say, "We're going to abolish rent control because we think it'll be better for the province" or "We have listened to the developers and the huge landlords in this province who say it's better and we're responding to that," if they say that, then at least they're being up front. But when you sneak it in today through the back door, then we in the Liberal Party are very concerned.

We would oppose the legislation in any event because we don't think it's good for the province. We think it's particularly onerous on senior citizens, on people with disabilities, on people with modest incomes and on university and college students in this province. We think it's particularly difficult for those people, and I'm told in senior citizens' homes there are some who have concerns that have to be looked at. I am very concerned about that. I think that's why we needed more debate in this House, not a lot more debate but more debate. That's why I believe we need more extensive hearings than the government is prepared to grant, so people can make those representations, so they can see what the final consequence will be of this government's actions.

To the government members I say keep in mind what people have told you. Yes, you have people who are opposed to you. That will always be the case, but some of your supporters very sincerely have said to you that you're moving too quickly, too drastically and you're not looking at the consequences of your actions. That is the case with this bill, and most assuredly that is going to be the case if you implement and impose the new rules that Mike Harris's team of experts, the unelected people in the Premier's office, have proposed for this House.

I want to yield the floor to my colleague from Windsor-Walkerville, who will continue this case.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Are we rotating here?

Mr Marchese: We're not rotating.

The Acting Speaker: I'll just give you a moment to work it out.

Mr Marchese: Madam Speaker, I would like unanimous consent to divide my time with the members for Welland-Thorold, Riverdale, yourself, and Beaches-Woodbine.

The Acting Speaker: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr Marchese: We tend to agree on these things.

Let's be clear about what this time allocation motion is all about. It's an attempt to extinguish the life of the opposition. It's an attempt to extinguish the opposition of such people as Michael Walker, who is here today, a councillor from the city of Toronto who lives in the riding of M. Saunderson, the member for Eglinton, who is the Minister for Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Michael Walker, who is not unknown in those Conservative circles, has been fighting this particular bill from its inception. Why is he doing that? Because people like him know the dramatic effect it is going to have on the seniors of his riding. That's why he's here today, to listen to the debate we're having and wanting to know

what the minister said and surely wanting to know what we have to say, because I believe we in the opposition reflect his views and the views of the people he represents in that riding.

When Minister Leach stands up to talk about the fact that this closure motion will allow for further consultation, I say it's disingenuous and I'll tell you why. We've had four weeks of public hearings on this very issue, not on an act but on a package, the tenant protection package, so called. Why do I say the minister's comments are disingenuous? They are because after four weeks of hearings on this very issue, which this bill reflects, M. Leach didn't listen at all. If anything, he listened to the developers and to the rich landlords who came in front of the committee. He didn't listen to people like Michael Walker who came to depute in our committee, who came and said, "Keep rent control because it's the best protection our tenants have."

Mr Leach and all the other underlings over there didn't listen. The Harrisites in that committee, listening to 70% of the people who came to speak against this bill, didn't listen. So M. Leach stands up again and again saying he wants time allocation so he can go back and present this bill to the public. If he didn't listen before, I ask those who are watching, why would you believe M. Leach and M. Beaubien, who is yawning, would listen again? They wouldn't be listening because the evidence before us is that if they didn't listen then, they're likely not to listen again.

You've got to look at the facts when you, as people watching, are deciding on issues of credibility. Does this government, member for Kitchener, I ask you, have any credibility when having taken that package that was called the tenant protection package, designed clearly to help tenants — if it does nothing for tenants and you then listen to 70% of the deputations, mon ami, and they don't listen at the end, does the government have any credibility? Of course not. How could it?

You've got to look at the evidence. You can't simply listen to M. Leach and say, "Oh, he sounds reasonable." It doesn't matter that he sounds reasonable, that he speaks the language of balance, that he speaks about fixing a problem as if somehow tenants are going to be fixed through this; it doesn't matter that he uses such language because what counts is what the bill says and what they did before with that package.

1610

Clearly the only people M. Leach listens to are the developers, because those are the ones who have got the cash, those are the people who have the bread to help Mr Leach out. You don't think M. Leach and the developers have met frequently over lunch to talk about how they'd fix the tenants, and restore balance to the poor landlord who is starving, who is not making enough money? Do you believe him? Does the minister have any credibility in this regard? I say no.

Look at Leach. He comes today and says, "These poor landlords" —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, just come to order a minute. I remind the member to refer to the minister as the Minister of Housing or by his riding.

Mr Marchese: Merci, Madame. I appreciate the intervention and I will remember to refer to M. Leach as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The minister comes today again and says, "These poor people, these poor landlords are not making enough money." He does it over and over again. Do you, listeners, do you, Mr Walker, believe that these landlords are not making enough money? If they weren't, would they be in the business? Of course not. They're making lots of money.

The person who did this study is J.J. Barnicke, no less. Do you think he's a friend of mine? No, he's one of the most well-known commercial property real estate people in Canada. He's the guy who says that the landlords are doing okay, that they're making a good return; in fact, a 10% to 15% return. Do you think this man is wrong — a well-known commercial realty person and a friend of M. Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who is a friend of developers, not tenants?

This poor man comes arguing today that these poor landlords are starving, literally saying that. He said today that they're barely breaking even. It's on the record. What do you think happened? They have a couple of lunches together, possibly dinners, I'm sure in a lot of Italian restaurants because Italian restaurants are very good, in downtown Toronto especially, and throughout. That's where they would meet to iron things out, to restore balance to those poor landlords who are starving. They work it out and they talk about how they can help each other. That's what this is all about.

Then the Minister of Municipal Affairs says, "We need this because people need choices." What does it mean that they need choices? I presume this poor minister, this besieged, beleaguered minister means that the private sector all of a sudden is going to build housing galore for the poor, the working poor, working people, middle-class people. I presume that's what he means. Don't you agree with me, Madam Speaker? I think that's what he means.

But we were told by his developer friends, his landlord friends — M. Lampert, the economist they hired to do that study, even agrees with us that there will be very little developed. Why? You know why. They know why. Developers will not build housing if there is no profit that comes back to them. The Speaker knows that.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Madam Minister of Culture, they build housing for the well-to-do. That's why we have a glut of condominiums on the market. They build for people like that because there's enough of a wealthy population in Ontario that wants that kind of stuff, but the developer doesn't build if the rate of return isn't sufficient to build for those who are in real need.

The people in real need are those seniors whose income has dropped over the years. Why has it dropped? Because when you become a senior, you lose your income power and you don't have a whole lot of money any more. These are the people who are going to be hurt and need housing. People with disabilities are already disfranchised from all layers of political and social life. These people need housing. Working people, whose income power is being gradually reduced by the policies

of this Conservative, Reform-minded government, need housing.

There is going to be a whole population sector in Ontario that's going to desperately look for affordable and accessible housing, and they're not going to get it, because M. Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, says, "We're getting out of the housing business." The minister says he's getting out. The private sector, through Mr Lampert, their economist, says they're not going to build any housing. The people who came in front of our committee as deputants said it's none of their business, none of their affair if housing does not get built for those who need it because they're not necessarily there, as governments should be, to make sure housing is provided for those who need it.

We've got a whole set of people who are saying they're out of that business: M. Leach, the minister; developers, who have said, "We're not building for the poor, it's not our business." If that is so, who's left?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Carrying on what you did.

Mr Marchese: Who's left, Steve, to build for those people? They don't care, and when we say they don't care, they say, "You don't have a monopoly on caring." We don't want a monopoly on caring. We want you to share that responsibility with us. We want you to be building housing, and if you're not going to build it because you don't give a damn, how are you going to make sure your friends are going to build when they clearly tell us there isn't enough money for them to build for those low-income people?

What role do you have as a government if not to care for those who are disfranchised by your policies and by the private market out there, which doesn't give a damn about those people left on the outside of economic and social life? If governments are no longer there to take on that responsibility to care for those who are marginalized, disfranchised by the private sector and by your policies, who's going to be there to help them?

Because they say they don't care either. They say: "You make it or you don't make it in this system. It's not our fault. And if you don't make it, it is your fault for not making it." This kind of capitalism doesn't necessarily speak to those needs. Capitalism doesn't give a damn about people's needs, it gives a damn about profits, and these are their messengers. This Tory government is the instrument of that message.

These are the foot soldiers here proclaiming the privileges of the free market system — not only the privileges but the wonders of the free market system. I tell you, when you leave the free market system to do its evil deeds, a whole lot of people are going to be shut out. They are.

Let me go on, because they say, "We've got a problem we've got to fix." M. Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, says: "It's broken. We've got to fix it." What does he mean? What he means is: "I'm taking sides as a minister. I'm with the landlords, and you, opposition, NDP, are with the tenants." We proudly say yes, we are, and they proudly say they are with the landlords. They said it in this House; it's on the record. They care about landlords, not about tenants.

When they say they need \$10 billion worth of repairs, I argue with that number because I'm not sure that is real, but if it were real, my point is this, Minister: Under the Liberal government, when they had rent review, we saw rents skyrocket, from 10% to 110% in many cases. That's why we introduced rent control: to prevent those kinds of insanities from happening. But even in those dirty years where landlords made a whole heap of money, what did they do with those dollars? Why did they not put that money back into restoration of their buildings? Why did they not do that rather than take the money they were making from poor tenants and invest it somewhere else as their buildings become dilapidated and then blame the NDP and their policies for that?

1620

Tenants know better. Tenants know, because I heard them in our rent protection package hearings, where they said what I am saying now: For years landlords have made money; how did they spend it? Open up your books and show us how you've shored up those buildings that are falling apart. For 20 years those buildings were falling apart. Finally they get a government such as the NDP, which brings about rent control, and they say: "Oh, my God, it's rent control that's bringing down our buildings. They're falling apart because of rent control." They were falling apart 20 years ago. The member for Lake Nipigon knows this. All of a sudden they have an NDP government they can blame, and they say, "Oh, it's the policies of the NDP government through its rent control."

But all the deputants who came in front of our committee said, "Keep rent control, Monsieur Leach, Minister of Municipal Affairs, because it's the only protection we've got." They know better.

There's more. The minister says that rent control will continue. He has to say that because M. Harris, the Premier, says rent control will continue. He said it before the election, so they have to dissemble in order to make the point. What do I mean when I say they have to dissemble? Clearly they are not keeping rent control, and I will explain why that is not so. Some 70% of all tenants, according to M. Lampert, their own economist — member for Lake Nipigon, do you know what he said? He said 70% of those tenants move within a five-year period. That means 70% of the entire 3.3 million tenants move within a five-year period.

But, member for Lake Nipigon, isn't this true? It is ipso facto the case that if 70% of the people move, it might as well be the elimination of rent control. You know what happens? When the tenant moves from place A to place B, that landlord can charge anything he wants or can get in apartment A and apartment B.

Mr Pouliot: What about pressuring the people to move?

Mr Marchese: I'll get to that. That's what happens. If 70% of the people are moving and the landlord can charge whatever he or she wants, it effectively kills rent control. M. Harris says rent control is still there, but it is meaningless if you can charge whatever you like to 70% of the people who move. The member for Lake Nipigon understands that, but you can hear the Tories; they don't

understand a thing. Either they don't understand or they refuse to understand.

Mr Pouliot: They're aspiring tenants.

Mr Marchese: I'm not sure they're aspiring tenants. They're good landlords.

The point of the decontrolling of rents is the following: You move, and as soon as you move you get whacked by the landlord with a rent increase. Therefore, ipso facto, those rent controls are gone.

What happens to the individual who stays? What happens to the 30% of the people who stay? They are what has been called by the movement of tenants "sitting ducks." I'll explain why. Member for St Catharines-Brock, I'll explain what that means.

At the moment you have the regular guideline increase, 2.8%. Landlords are allowed at the moment to increase that by 3% on capital repairs, and you've got to go through a hearing. They say nothing changes to the existing tenants, but the reason why tenants are arguing they're sitting ducks is because there is a slight change that will increase the rents. Member for St Catharines-Brock, what is that difference? That 3% of capital repairs goes, under your bill, to 4%. That is a 1% automatic increase without doing a thing, so you can help your poor landlord friends who are starving, who can't go to the fine restaurants to eat.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Member for St Catharines-Brock, listen. Then any increases you get in property taxes or utilities are added on, whereas under our Rent Control Act, existing still until you change it, it's already built in. Property taxes and utility bills are included in the guideline. Your fine government, through this fine bill, is going to pass that additional cost on to the tenant, the sitting duck.

Then M. Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, says: "Oh, nothing changes. We've still got rent controls. The people who stay are not affected." We are proving that all this smacks of a lack of credibility, don't you think, to say the least?

Mr Pouliot: Could the minister be lying?

Mr Marchese: It's difficult to say. You know matters of mendacity cannot be dealt with in this House. You know that. It's disingenuous, to say the least. M. Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, is about to get rid of the rent registry, which permitted people to know what they were paying before they entered into a rental unit. The minister says we don't need that any more. He's getting rid of the rent registry. The poor tenants won't have a clue any more what they were paying before, because this government says, "We're about to get rid of rent control, so we don't need a rent registry."

Mr Pouliot: What about forcing Mrs Jones to leave?

Mr Marchese: The member for Lake Nipigon mentioned, "What about forcing Mrs Jones to leave?" I'll tackle it now in case I forget. This government proudly says, "We are increasing the fines so that those who are likely to discriminate will get a fine from \$25,000 to \$50,000." This government says: "Aren't we great? When we increase the fine to \$50,000, no landlord is going to discriminate." Do you believe that, though, member for Lake Nipigon? You don't believe that.

The seniors who came in front of our committee don't believe it either. You know what they told us? I was there throughout all the hearings. They said: "We don't have the energy to go after a landlord who harasses us, who hassles us. We don't have the energy, the knowhow, the stamina to take the appeal through the process and take them to the tribunal." They know they are under their care. When a senior is under the care of a landlord with power and money, do you think that 70-year-old lady or man is going to go to that landlord and say, "You can't do that; you can't just shut off the taps; you can't just put me on hold for three months while that faucet is leaking; you can't force me to wait for months until we get rid of the rats"? That's what they do. But do you think seniors are going to have the power, the muscle, the knowhow to deal with such landlords? They don't.

This bill by these "honourables" that speaks about increasing the fine is not going to deal with issues of discrimination, and people will be forced out. Why? So that as they are forced out, the incoming person can get whatever rent increase is demanded. That's what happens to that senior. That's what happens to the person with a disability. That's what happens to that poor working person. They will be squeezed out ever so delicately, or harshly, by that landlord who knows what to do to get them out.

Costs no longer borne: Under rent control, something the NDP brought in, once an item was bought for that apartment and paid for, the cost of that item was wiped off. These fine "misérables" on the other side, these "honourables" on the other side, are getting rid of that clause, costs no longer borne, so that once an item is bought already and they're purchasing another item, that item stays on the rents forever. Gary, you've got to pay attention to these things.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'm listening to you, because nobody else is.

Mr Marchese: Mr Stewart is listening. I'm glad. Costs no longer borne.

Tenants constitute a third of the entire population; 33% of the population are tenants. But you know, member for Lake Nipigon, what I think is happening here? This is the fact: These guys know. These guys here to my left, the Conservatives here to the left, know that 70% of tenants do not vote, so they are taking advantage of that fact. They are taking advantage of the fact that we have an electorate, as tenants, who do not vote. So they are about to inflict this on those who do not know any better, who do not vote and cannot and will not teach these people a lesson. That's why they're doing it.

Do you think they would go after the landlords? Do you think they would go after developers? Do you think they would go after the rich in this province? They would not. They go after the most vulnerable members of our society because they know it is not a constituency that has yet fought back against governments.

1630

Mr Bradley: Do you mean the developers?

Mr Marchese: They won't take the developers on, I was saying, because those friends would speak up and they would be angry. They would be there with M. Leach the next day arguing over lunch how to undo it.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Member for Scarborough East.

Mr Marchese: But not with tenants who are poor, not with people with disabilities who are poor, not with seniors who are poor and disabled at times, frail and unable to cope and deal with a government that is about to give them a whole serious whack with its fairness bill. That's what they're about to do, member for Lake Nipigon.

There is so much more to talk about. The minister speaks and gets up to say: "Oh, we've got to go and consult, but they don't listen. The system is flawed." Flawed for whom? It's flawed for the developer and the landlord. It's flawed for them. That's why he wants to fix the system. That's what he means. That's what he's saying. There's \$10 billion worth of repairs? Then get your landlord friends to spend the money they've made and restore those buildings. Don't go to the poor tenant and ask for more as you transfer more of the money to those who M. Barnicke, that fine commercial realtor, said are making plenty of money. Don't transfer it from those who don't have to those who already have a whole lot, Minister. It's wrong. It is morally wrong. It is economically wrong. Because it is so unjust, it will catch up with you later on. It will catch up with you later, if not now.

He's getting rid of the Rental Housing Protection Act. The Rental Housing Protection Act was there to protect our rental stock, because we knew, through our rental control bill, that we needed to preserve the little we had. We knew we needed to preserve it. We knew because that was the role of government, to make sure there is enough housing that's affordable, that is there for people who need affordable and accessible homes. We did that because we felt it was the role of government to do.

You are abandoning your role as a government to protect those people. How could a government ever get away with that? Mind you, the federal Liberals are doing the same thing. They're getting out of the way. They're devolving everything to the provinces, to the point that we are losing anything by way of standards. We are losing what holds us together as Canadians. M. Chrétien is about to sell it all, to Ontario, to Alberta and to Quebec; to appease the west, to appease Quebec and to some extent to appease you guys over here. But as you do that, we lose our national fabric, our national flavour. Once the government steps out of the way, that role is lost, and what's left is the free market system of those rich globetrotters around the world who are there with the design to get rid of governments and their policies that protect our social services.

The Conservatives, of course, we can dismiss out of hand. We know those are their policies. They're in the back pocket of the multinationals. We know that. We didn't expect it of the federal Liberals, but they too are abandoning the role of government, and I find that the most shameful act of our Canadian history. All we can hope is that the people who are watching today wake up to the new reality, where governments are losing control, where governments are abdicating whatever control they've got. We've got to fight that phenomenon that is taking place, where those who own the financial means and those with the big bucks — because I tell you, there

is a whole lot of money in Ontario and in Canada, but it doesn't belong to us; it belongs to the financial institutions.

These Tory members are the instruments of those people there, and as they get involved together, in cahoots with one another, governments are being brought asunder, and we have to fight that. That's why it's important in these debates to bring these points out, because if we don't do that, you will not expect the government to do that for us. Listen to what the ministers have to say. Everything they say is in generalities; nothing is ever specific. They prefer it that way, because if you got to know the facts, you would think differently of this government.

There's so much more here that they speak about. There is something here under the changes that affect the care homes. Under this change, the care home landlords can try to evict a tenant who no longer needs the level of care provided by the landlord, or a tenant who needs a level of care that the landlord is not able to provide. This is a new reason for eviction. Imagine. We in our party, in the NDP, realized that those people who are very vulnerable needed protection. These people in these care homes have a contractual agreement to provide a service. But this government, through this section, in this bill, permits the caregiver, the landlord, to simply send somebody away because they've decided, "We just don't want to look after this person any more." Under the guise of saying, "We no longer can provide that service," they're just going to force them out the door. That's what this bill does too for those who are most vulnerable. I find it shameful.

We heard Mr Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, speak today and he said he was going to listen to the Human Rights Commission and the commissioner, because he's a good friend of theirs. He's a good Tory appointment. I'm glad. He wrote a fine two- or three-page letter saying to this government, "Don't make the change to the Human Rights Code that would allow landlords to check tenants' credit ratings for the type of income they have when they apply for an apartment." The government is making this change even though the law says that a landlord cannot refuse to rent to someone because that person receives public assistance.

This is an assault. We know how this works. We know that landlords would rather have men and women and families who earn stable bucks so that money comes steadily and without any concern. But if and when you do that, those vulnerable individuals that we sought to protect under our rent act are on their own. If those people are not allowed to enter into their apartments, where would they go?

The minister doesn't address this. He's saying, "Don't worry, we'll address it through choice," because, presumably, although he didn't say this, the private sector is going to be building so much of that housing stock, these poor people, these buggers who some landlords may not like, will find some fine accommodation or appropriate accommodation somewhere else. But the landlord is not going to build for those people because they're not making money. They're waiting for M. Leach and Mr Harris to come with the purse, open it up and say to that

landlord: "Here it is. Take all the money. Take what you want and go and build." That's what they're waiting for. They're waiting for that big giveaway without which the landlord will not build. That's what they're waiting for, but it's not coming.

It's not coming because to give away the store, as the Tories and Liberals did in the 1970s, is to give away land for free, is to give a whole lot of other interest-free loans or things of that nature to make it profitable for the landlord to build. If you do that, you then subsidize the landlord and the developer again. You subsidize particularly the developer to build for the public interest. You are literally then giving money away so the developer can build, and if you have to do that, Minister, then you might as well build yourself. If you're going to give away so much to the developer, then don't make him any richer. You build housing as we did. We built housing because we felt it was the duty of government to do so. We believed, as NDPers, that it was the duty of governments to provide housing for those who cannot afford the type of housing that is there. We believe that capital stock belongs to the people through governments, and we believe if you give away tax breaks or if you give away land or interest-free loans to the developer to make more money, you are giving them public money. Now they own that private property and in the end it will cost us more to give so much away to those with whom M. Leach, the minister, I'm sure has dined or has had lunch to talk about how they are going to fix this problem, this system that is flawed.

This is no balance. They did not have balance even under our NDP policies. Even with our rent control they didn't get the balance they needed, they argued. So the tenant movement said, "If you are going to help tenants, fix it so as to make it better for tenants." But M. Leach, the minister, is not doing that. He is fixing a system that he says is flawed for the landlord. That's what he is doing. He is taking sides with those people who don't need our help, and he's got nothing for tenants. He has absolutely nothing for tenants. It is quite clear, as you dissect this bill — as those of you who are watching have the opportunity to exfoliate the malodorous onion that this bill is — you will see that there is nothing for the tenants, nothing at all, and that it's a continual giveaway to the developer.

1640

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Isn't this the same speech you gave before?

Mr Marchese: Sure. But look at the speech that your minister made. I took notes again. He said the same thing today that he said a couple of weeks ago. Wayne, what do you expect us to do? He keeps on repeating the same stuff. The script doesn't change, but at least I am speaking to the facts of the bill. He doesn't. Your minister doesn't speak to the facts of the bill. He generalizes and says: "This is great for everybody. This is great because the system is flawed. This is great because now developers will build. This is great because now tenants are going to have choices."

What is that? Do you understand that? Does that give you any sense of what the bill is all about? Nada. It gives you nada comprehension whatsoever.

Mr Wettlaufer: What about tenants? Their buildings are going to have to be repaired.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Kitchener-Wilmot.

Mr Wettlaufer: Kitchener.

Mr Marchese: I know the member for Kitchener constantly talks about how he and I were immigrants and what about those immigrant landlords? I agree with that, sure. We know there are a lot of immigrant landlords —

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Canadians of course — who own a single house and rent.

Hon Mr Leach: It's small business.

Mr Marchese: Small business, of course, sure, and they rent their basements or they rent a room in their apartments. Many of them rent, true, but those people by and large are not the people we have problems with. There is nothing in your bill that fixes any concerns they might have had. Although Wayne speaks about them, this bill does not address any of those problems that the small landlord might be having. We have no beef with them. The strongest arguments against the landlords are those landlords typical of the ones we might have in St James Town here at Sherbourne and Wellesley, those apartment buildings that are 20 or 30 storeys high. It is those tenants who have concerns with such landlords. The facts are there, Minister. You know that. You are very close to them.

Hon Mr Leach: My riding.

Mr Marchese: That's your riding, exactly. I haven't seen you go walking down there, talking to the tenants about how you are going to fix it for them, but they expect you —

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You have? Tell us what you did for them, because I tell you, the problems continue there year after year, in spite of the fact that those city councillors who are of that area have fought for years to try to help them out. You've done nothing for them.

These are the landlords we are fighting against, not the little landlord who owns a house, a two-storey house or a three-storey house, or a unit where there is a threeplex or fourplex or fiveplex. They are, by and large, okay. The problems are with the large landlords.

We've heard them throughout Ontario, wherever we went to listen to the people. They had horror stories of what they had to endure as tenants and associations fighting the miscreants, horror stories of what they have to deal with daily, weekly, monthly, yearly in having to deal with a landlord who refuses to do the very basic things that you expect as a tenant when there is a problem with your home. These are the people we are fighting.

I tell you, Minister, we're not fighting them alone. There are advocates here. And the movement of advocacy and advocates, the tenant movement advocates — and there are a number of them across Ontario — have been defunded by you. Why would you do that? At a time when you were about to whack them in the head with the whole loss of rights and rental increases, this is the time they need a movement or advocacy groups that are there to help tenants, because you know that 70% of those

people don't vote. You know that, Minister; that's why you're doing it.

I tell you, if 70% of those tenants voted, you would not be doing this. You would be frightened and terrified in your Tory boots if 70% of those people voted. But you know the facts and you know that 70% do not vote, and that is why you are about to assault them again through your Tory policies. You've decided they don't need advocates.

This is a government that hates advocacy and advocates in general. They have done a massacre of all advocacy in every area imaginable. Remember the Advocacy Commission? It's gone. It was designed after we heard 15 years of complaints, 15 years of the fact that we needed an Advocacy Commission to take care of the most vulnerable seniors, people with disabilities and people with mental illness.

This government says: "We don't need advocacy any more. We don't need a commission to deal with that. We've got families to deal with them." When we pointed out that sometimes families are those who perpetrate injustices to their family members, they said: "Oh, these people are fighting the family. They're fighting families."

We weren't fighting families. We were saying some families are good and they do a great deal of good to their own members, but we know through the facts and the research and those experts who came in front of our committee that many of these people find themselves very vulnerable, not just with others but with members of their own family. This government disregarded all of that. And you have the Minister of Municipal Affairs saying he wants to get on with the job because he wants to get out and listen to the public, the way he listened on the tenant protection package, where he dismissed everything tenants had to say? Is that the kind of consultation M. Leach wants? I don't think so.

I find it difficult to have to go back to those tenants again and bring them out into committee, only to tell them, "Do you think Mr Leach and Mr Harris are going to listen to you this time because they're bringing this package back in the form of an act?" Why would they believe it? They have been jaded by the fact that you have the audacity to call this bill a tenant protection act, because they know from the evidence there is nothing in the act that protects tenants. That's why I say it dissembles. This bill fabricates. This bill has no credibility. The minister is disingenuous when he speaks about fixing a problem for the tenants, because it doesn't do that.

And then this minister brings a new form of remedy to people who have a problem with their landlord. He says he's going to create a tribunal. I remind the folks here, these fine honorables, that most of the lawyers and most of the agencies that represent tenants that came to speak against that landlord protection package said 95% of all cases are dealt with appropriately, efficiently and fast. It is only 5% of the cases that are troublesome. So what does M. Harris, through his instrument M. Leach, do? He creates a new tribunal.

He's going to create another bureaucracy. Do we believe this new bureaucracy is going to solve the problems having to do with a remedy someone seeks? I think not. It is my personal belief that this will not

happen any more efficiently than under the old system. So the minister set up a new bureaucracy that will be costly and full of patronage appointments.

1650

Remember, when the NDP was in, this government used to attack us at every turn. Every time there was a smell of an NDP candidate being thought of as a person to be appointed on some commission, board or agency, the Tories were there smelling it out, snorking the NDPers out so they could say: "Look at this government. Look at the NDP. Look at them give away these patronage seats here and there."

The Tories said then that they were going to be better. Speaker, you know that, because you're a Liberal opposition member. They said that when they got in they would be an example to be followed. An example to be followed indeed. You can't find more than a couple of people you can count on your hands, Minister, who are anything but a Tory or Reform-minded person of your colours, of your type. But they said they were going to be different.

Hon Mr Leach: Does the name Cooke ring a bell?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): How about Dave Cooke?

Mr Marchese: "How about Dave Cooke?" They appoint a former colleague of ours and they say, "That should take care of it," without making the point that they do that for a purpose. They never appoint anyone such as they did with Dave Cooke other than to try to embarrass us with a particular issue, so they can look saintly, almost, so they can look as if, "Not all our appointments are Tory, by God." But they are. We know it, you know it, and you make no bones about it.

We worry that these appointments on this tribunal will be Tory appointments. The lawyers and the organizations that came to defend and protect tenants said: "We're worried about Tory patronage appointments. We're worried they will be very political." They know that. If your appointments are very Tory in their ideology, are tenants going to get a fair shake in this new tribunal Minister Leach has set up? I'm worried because there is no sense from this government or this minister that we're going to get people who are absolutely neutral, clean of that Tory stench or taint.

Mr Pouliot: Would I get an appointment?

Mr Marchese: I don't think my friend from Lake Nipigon is going to get an appointment, absolutely not — not yet, at least.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): That all depends what you apply for.

Mr Marchese: It depends what you apply for, but you have to speak to M. Leach in private, and you might have to pay for that lunch. You never know, later on.

This new tribunal is going to be costly to set up. I'm certainly not clear or sure that it can be more effective than the present system that was effective 95% of the time. The system is flawed, and yes, it needs fixing, but it needs continued fixing, such as the NDP did, in order to continue to help tenants out.

I want to conclude by urging those who are watching, particularly if they are tenants, to come out at public meetings, once these debates come back again, to meet

with your honorables on the other side, to go to their offices in great numbers so that you can talk to them, so that you can look them in the eyes as they tell you this bill is about protecting you as a tenant. Ask Mr Leach and these other fine honorables on the other side to point to what there is in the bill for you as a tenant. Make them accountable to you.

If you tenants take control and exercise the power you've got, some of these Tory members will quiver. They will worry because many of them want to be re-elected. They will go back to M. Leach and tell him: "Minister, we've got a problem here. There's a whole lot of politicization happening. There are a whole lot of tenants who have woken up to the fact that you are about to whack them and we've got to do something."

If you do not do that, those of you who are watching this program and are tenants, this government will continue to get away taking sides, helping the poor starving landlord and the poor starving developer, versus dumping and giving you yet another whack on another issue. This whack has to do with rental increases and the loss of your protections as a tenant, where the landlord who has all the power will exercise it under the legitimacy of a new act brought in by this Reform government, at the service of those who have a great deal of wealth. You've got to get out there, you've got to write the minister and your members letters.

More than writing the minister a letter with "Private and confidential" on the front of it, you've to force a meeting with Minister Saunderson or other ministers who are in the metropolitan area, because a lot of our rental stock is in Metro. Some 40% of our rental stock is in Metro. Those of you who live there need to speak to our members from Metro. M. Harnick is here today listening to this debate; other people are here from other ridings, like Derwyn Shea from High Park. You've got to talk to them. You've got to meet with them and say, "What are you people doing?"

Mr Pouliot: It's pretty difficult; they're busy.

Mr Marchese: I hear a lot of complaints. I went to Ridgetown the other day where people told me, "We have a hell of a time talking to the member," from that area. Ridgetown is in Kent county. I understand that sometimes you've got a hell of a time reaching your member, who may not be interested in running again, for a variety of different reasons. But if they are interested in running again, you've got to force a meeting with them and make them accountable. They are your servants.

The Reform and Conservative Party likes to talk about recall and being the servants of the people. If they refuse to meet with you, they're losing sight of that wonderful ideology they care about, that is, listening to the public, listening to your needs and what you want. I urge you to meet with them. If you do, these members, in spite of who they are, in spite of the stench of autocracy they leave throughout Ontario, will have to listen to you. They will listen to you. Send them those letters. Send me a copy so I know you're doing it, so that we know and we help each other as we try to fight back against a government that is taking away a lot of your social and political rights.

I thank you for your attention. I know other members of my caucus will want to speak later.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I want to take the opportunity this evening to address not just Bill 96, the tenant rejection act, the landlord and developer protection act, but I also want to address the government's overall housing agenda, and also in the time that's allotted to me the government's overall housing policy and the government's way of doing business both in this House and across this province.

When I spoke originally on Bill 96, I quoted Mr Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in a speech he made to the Ontario Home Builders' Association on October 19, 1995, where he said, "I've said it before and I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go." Then, less than a year later, in a by-election campaign in a Metro Toronto riding, we had quotations from the Ontario Conservative Party candidate at that time that rent control would continue, tenant protection would be improved under the Mike Harris government and that the Mike Harris tenant protection plan would help to ensure that tenants were not subject to unfair rent increases.

1700

I intend to show, as tenants in this province already know, that this government's rhetoric and its deeds are not the same. Let us begin by talking about the government's agenda in housing so far.

In its 1996 business plan, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mr Leach, announced that 21% of his workforce in his ministry would be cut. That's 398 jobs. The operating budget of that ministry would be cut by \$27 million, 2.4%, in a year. But that's not where the deepest cuts occurred. Those are not the policies that were most harmful to tenants in this province. Let's not forget that in July 1995, 390 approved non-profit housing projects were cancelled; \$120 million cut in the housing capital budget resulting from the elimination of support for all new non-profit housing.

What do we begin to see shaping up? We see the elimination of tenant protection in Bill 96 and we see the government withdrawing from the provision of affordable and non-profit housing in the Ontario market at the same time. This is a recipe for developers, for landlords, not for those people in this province who so urgently and desperately need housing.

Let's not forget some other things the government has done since it came to office: \$25 million, or 11%, of the Ontario Housing Corp's operating budget and \$51 million, or 26%, of its capital budget was cut for 1996-97. The Ontario Housing Corp's capital repair budget was cut by \$13 million, or 25%. So what do we see yet again? A reduced commitment to public housing and elimination of development of non-profit and affordable housing and a removal of tenant protection via Bill 96. We see, then, a policy that is designed and aimed to protect landlords, not tenants.

When the minister spoke today about balance and fairness, I was amused, I was taken aback, because there's nothing at all balanced in this legislation. We see for the first time in a generation, for the first time, really, since prior to the Davis government, a retreat from tenant protection in this province. We see a government that is

prepared, through a variety of legislative initiatives, to remove itself from protecting tenants and wants to create a climate that benefits only landlords. We say that that policy that's encompassed not only in Bill 96 but across a broad range of housing initiatives by this government is the wrong form of public policy.

Was there a need for change? Certainly. Are there aspects of the bill that our party finds amenable? Certainly. There's no question all of us have dealt with small landlords who have been left in very difficult situations. But I say the government is abandoning tenants not to small landlords but to big landlords.

Let's talk about the rental market in Ontario for a few minutes. Let's review just what it is that we're talking about. Today there are approximately 3.2 million tenants in Ontario, and they occupy approximately 1.4 million rental units; 45% of these units are here in Metropolitan Toronto, 10% are in Ottawa. Overall, 80% of the units are private, with the remainder being either public or non-profit housing. Interestingly enough, today in the business page of the Globe and Mail we see that the housing market is again heating up in Toronto, the way it did in the 1980s.

We see a current vacancy rate of less than 1% in this city, less than what it was when the Bill Davis Tory government introduced rent control back in 1975. Toronto is but one example. There are cities, large urban centres, where the vacancy rate is not as high: Hamilton 2%, Sudbury 6%, Ottawa 4.2%, Thunder Bay 6.4%, and my home, Windsor, 1.8%.

In the book *Boom, Bust and Echo* we see predictions that by the turn of the century, three years from now, the demand for rental housing will increase yet again. I will make a prediction that there will be plenty of what used to be called in the legislation "luxury" apartments available for rent in Toronto and the other large urban centres, but because of the combination of this government's policies, the number of rental units that would be classified as affordable or within the reach of the poor, the disabled, seniors, those of modest income, will be dwindling and diminishing, and contrary to what the government argues, the private sector will not move in to fill the gap.

Adam Smith's famous invisible hand won't bring the market into equilibrium. What will happen is that accommodation will be available on the highest end. If you're a landlord or a developer and you can invest in apartment units that will yield you a higher profit, a higher return on your investment in the upper range, why would you invest anywhere else? Of course there will be investment, but it will be in the sections of the market where investment is least needed.

What will happen? First of all, the obvious human tragedy. Today in Toronto one third of renters pay more than 30% of their income in rent. That is a high percentage. I'll bet not many of the members opposite in the government party, the Tories, have to worry about that. But to people on limited incomes, people whose welfare benefits that government has cut, pensioners whose Canada pension has not gone up very much, 30% of their income is a lot.

I say to the wealthy developers and my friends opposite in the Tory party that if you went to a bank and tried to negotiate a mortgage and said that the mortgage and taxes would eat 30% of your income, that bank would look long and hard at whether it would lend you the money. Why? Because they know that to feed yourself, to provide for your family, you need a large percentage of your disposable income available, and the more of that that goes into housing, the less you have for things like clothes and food for your children. And with the cutbacks in education that we've seen, more and more costs are being borne by parents. Again, who does it impact on the most? It impacts the most on those of the most modest means, those who are least able to afford it.

Today in Toronto the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$661; the maximum shelter allowance under social assistance is \$325.

1710

Mr Pouliot: It's okay if you are rich.

Mr Duncan: That's right, member for Lake Nipigon: If you're rich, you can afford it.

But again, as we've seen in policy after policy from this government, they don't care. They don't want to deal with the tens of thousands of people in this province, in this city and in the large urban centres right across Ontario: Windsor, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Hamilton, London, Ottawa. They don't want to deal with those people.

They don't want to be concerned about those people who are making it from paycheque to paycheque, if they have a paycheque. They don't want to deal with the senior citizen who's struggling on a pension. They don't want to deal with the disabled or those on family benefits. They don't want to think about it, because in their world, in their trickle-down world, if you put more money in the pockets of the wealthy, the benefit will trickle down to those below.

But what history has told us and what the research says is that that is simply not the case. What you do is create a wider gap between rich and poor. You create a whole underclass of citizens who will struggle and have a difficult time making it in their day-to-day existence and day-to-day lives.

Interjection.

Mr Pouliot: Good speech for Windsor.

Mr Duncan: One speaks of passion, one speaks of the need to understand. My colleagues for Welland-Thorold and Lake Nipigon speak of my Windsor roots. Yes, indeed, we look across the river and see a city that has the wealthiest of the wealthy and the poorest of the poor. We see what happens when a government abandons the middle road, when a government takes away from those who need protection and gives to those who least need it.

With this combination of policies — the reduction of the government's role in housing in general; the elimination of any further development of non-profit housing; the reduction in funds available in future in the rent-geared-to-income category; the removal of tenant protection; the moves this government has made with respect to disentanglement, downloading — what do we see? We see a housing market that will leave tenants and the most vulnerable unprotected. Will it, as the minister says,

create supply? I agree it will create supply — in the upper end, where the profits are the highest. Will it solve the problem of the vast majority of people in this province or help them cope on a day-to-day basis? No, it will not.

Let's talk about Bill 96 itself for a few minutes and let's deal with the provisions in that bill and what it means specifically for tenants in Ontario. At present, rent controls apply to all rental units. New buildings are exempt from controls for their first five years. Rent controls still apply to a rental unit when it's vacated.

Now, under this government, rent controls will be removed when an apartment becomes vacant. Once a person moves into an apartment, they are covered by the maximum rent increase guideline for the duration of their occupancy. The government argues that it's the middle road; we argue that it's the slow death of rent control. Indeed, Lampert argues that it's not even a slow death, that it will happen within five years. When you look at the turnover rate in vacant apartments and when you further look at those numbers and divide them into the communities where the rental issues are the biggest, where you have the largest tenant populations, it will happen even more quickly than that.

What we have here is a situation where it will be in the landlord's interest to have as many new tenants as possible. What does this mean? It means there is going to be more tenant harassment. It means that fewer and fewer repairs will be done. It means that landlords will want to get people to move along. Irony of ironies, the minister calls this bill the Tenant Protection Act, but in the bill itself he acknowledges that there will be more tenant harassment. There's a fundamental contradiction: On the one hand they say they're protecting tenants, but on the other hand in the bill they recognize that tenant harassment will increase.

How do we know this? The bill proposes the creation of an anti-harassment unit in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and a doubling of the fines for harassing tenants, to \$10,000 for individual landlords and \$50,000 for corporations. Well, in how many bills have we seen them apply these big fines and how many times have those fines actually been implemented? The results are startling. They talk a good game and they put it in the legislation, knowing full well that these types of fines and sanctions will never ever be implemented. And of course now rent controls will never be applied to new buildings.

What's going to happen? I say again, we will see development — yes, I agree — of luxury buildings, and for those who are in a position to afford them, they'll have more choice. But that choice will not extend down to the poorest, that choice will not extend down to those of a modest income who are renters, that choice will not extend to those who need the choice. The protection they've enjoyed to date, protection that in some instances may not even be good protection, but at least they've had some protection — what we see with this government is a removal of that protection and a diminution overall of our ability to protect tenants from landlords and developers. That is an unfortunate development that this government has contemplated and is now implementing with lightning speed.

Remember that the government's own study last fall, the Lampert report, said that 25% of tenants move every year and 70% in five years. It's likely quicker in areas like Toronto. That means that rent control, for all intents and purposes, will be gone in the province by the turn of the century.

Maintenance and repairs: Successive governments, landlords and tenants have wrestled with this issue. Currently, landlords are only permitted to charge an additional increase of 3% per year to cover the cost of repairs. Landlords must apply to a rent officer for that increase. What we see now in Bill 96 is that landlords will be permitted to charge an additional increase of 4% per year to cover the cost of repairs. They will have to apply to the dispute tribunal that the minister's creating for approval of that rent increase.

We've also seen that changes to the Planning Act and the Building Code Act are contemplated. Municipal building inspectors will now have the responsibility for responding to tenant complaints. Again we see a government that's just saying: "Let's get out of this altogether. We have no business in protecting or regulating tenants and landlords in this province."

1720

They're doing this at a time when they are cutting transfers to municipalities; they are doing it at a time when they are downloading social housing to municipalities; and they're doing it at a time when there's probably more confusion at the municipal level than we have witnessed in the history of this province.

What it means is that municipalities will be given greater responsibility at a time when they have fewer resources, and other responsibilities being thrust on them by this government. Quite frankly, it means yet again a policy that's deliberately designed to remove protections from tenants and to take sides with landlords and developers in a way that is unfortunate and does not even address the problem the Tories are trying to address, which is the need for new rental unit accommodation in this province.

The government is abdicating — indeed the government is creating a situation where there will be less rental accommodation, in our view, for tenants and more profit for the landlords and developers, who already do quite well in Ontario.

I want to talk about the housing market relative to this initiative, and the way the government has approached this bill. Let's not forget that today we're dealing with closure. We are dealing with a government motion to end debate. We are dealing with yet again more force by a government that has shown, throughout its mandate, too much desire to force debate to move fast.

As my colleague from St Catharines said, no matter what the politics are, no matter what you think of individual initiatives this government has undertaken, they've done a lot. The one complaint I hear time and again, even from supporters of the government, is that maybe they're going a little too fast, maybe they're not putting enough thought into what they're doing, maybe they're trying to jam through this change — and it's massive, this change — without a lot of thought and without due consideration to the potential consequences.

Indeed, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced the so-called mega-week announcements and they've had to retreat from virtually all of them. The ones they've stuck to we know darned well aren't going to work, and, in the case of the amalgamation of the cities in Toronto, over the objection of the vast majority of people in this community. We see what happens when a government moves without proper consideration.

The government will try to suggest that it is holding more hearings on this bill than either of the current opposition parties did when they were in office. That simply is not the case. When their bills were passed, they were passed with the consent of the opposition parties.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order, please, members. If you have any pressing issues, you can take them to the lobby if you like. Otherwise, could we bring it down just a bit? Thank you.

Mr Duncan: The government is pushing ahead. Today, ironically, the Premier's rule changes were brought forward by one of his minions, rule changes that will take away the opposition's ability to fully debate government initiatives, rule changes that are designed to stifle full debate in this province, rule changes that ultimately serve the government's interests and not the interests of the broader public in this province. I guess we shouldn't be surprised; they've been threatening it for months.

I hear all the time, even from supporters of the government, that they're going too far too fast. Yes, there has been immense change. Politics aside — the government members support it; we oppose much of it — most people I talk to are concerned, including Tories right across this province, that they're going too fast. That's why they had to back down on most of the mega-week announcements, because they realized after we raised the issues, after they heard from municipalities, that you just can't bulldoze ahead without thought or consideration to the consequence, that what makes sense from a narrow provincial perspective might not make sense in a broader context and with other partners who share in the administration of legislation or programs.

We see the same with Bill 96. Last summer we had so-called hearings. Absolutely nothing has changed. The government's position of last summer is reflected completely in Bill 96. We have raised the specific case of sections 36 and 200, the portions of the bill that would deny basic human rights to the poorest people in this province. We've asked the minister specifically, will he remove the offensive sections, and he says, "Put it in committee and we'll see." We asked him twice today for a specific commitment on those issues. What did we get? Nothing.

I'll predict today that that's exactly what we'll get in the government's amendments. We'll see on the day they bring forward their amendments whether they take out those clauses. It's not simply the opposition; it's the government's own human rights commissioner who is advocating that those offensive sections be removed — a commission chairperson, by the way, who was appointed by that government; not a leftover appointment from a previous government but your own appointment. The chair of that commission has said they will make representations.

The Speaker: Look, folks, if you want to have a discussion, I suggest you take it outside. It's difficult, with the din, to hear the speaker.

Mr Duncan: In conclusion, I suggest that Bill 96 and the government's housing policies are an attack on tenants. They remove tenants' rights to be protected. They stand for the developer, for the landlord. They are undoing a generation of progress in the area of rent control. They propose to solve a problem. They propose that these changes will make more rental accommodation available. We say you're wrong; it'll make more luxury accommodation available but it won't address the broad mass of people in this community, Toronto, and other large urban centres who really don't have access to affordable housing.

That problem will become more acute in the next three to five years and it will be a problem that this Legislature and the next Legislature will address, because tenant concerns have been with us for many years and will continue to be with us.

We in the opposition say that in 1999, after the next election, we'll repeal Bill 96 and replace it with real rent control. We will do so recognizing that rent control does not hinder development; rent control protects tenants.

We will do so recognizing that improvements can always be found, to find a better match between what protects tenants and landlords, but recognizing always first and foremost, in large urban centres especially, where there is a limited supply and a large demand for affordable, decent living, that government has a significant role to play in regulating the prices in that market and ensuring that tenants in all our centres are protected from an unfettered market that serves the interests of landlords and developers, serves the interests of profit over people.

We say to the government, withdraw this bill and put people before profit and recognize that government has a role to play in protecting the most vulnerable in our society.

1730

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I should tell you, I'm very aware that we're debating yet another time allocation motion, yet another effort in a series of concentrated efforts on the part of this government to suppress debate, to turn this assembly, this chamber, into a mere showpiece, to make what happens here irrelevant to democracy. Indeed, this government has done more to put democracy under attack in this province, no matter how much there was by way of resistance from opposition parties, than any government in this chamber's history ever has. That's something that should be of great concern to everybody.

You'll recall last week when there was a modest request on the part of the opposition to exchange Monday for Friday in the calendar this week to permit members, Liberals, New Democrats, yes, Conservatives — if there are any Conservatives here. Please don't look at me quizzically. By God, I read of Bob Wood, from out there in Middlesex, standing with his leader —

Interjection: London South.

Mr Kormos: London South. See the impact he has made? We have difficulty knowing some of the ridings of these people.

This is one of the problems with time allocation motions. I'm opposing this not so much for New Democrats or Liberals. We know there aren't a whole lot of us here. There are a few more Liberals. We have an opportunity to address these bills, sometimes, during the course of debate. It's government members who are being denied the opportunity to stand up and explain where they stand on this attack on tenants.

Most interesting would be to hear from members in the Toronto area, where huge developers with their run-down high-rises, elevators broken, screens off windows, paint peeling, plumbing systems corroded, infested with cockroaches — it would be interesting to hear where Conservative members stand on protecting tenants from the vultures in the high-rise apartment industry. We don't get a chance to hear from them. We don't know where they stand. It's the rare government member who does stand and speak to this or any other number of bills which have been subjected to this very undemocratic, anti-democratic closure motion.

These are tools whereby the government can snuff, kill, eliminate debate. Debate is supposed to be what takes place here so that the issues can be raised so that one can attempt to persuade others of a particular policy or so that opposition members can point out the flaws in a particular policy and the legislation that is driven by it.

We don't hear from government members, especially those in, let's say, the Toronto area, explaining why they'd be supporting a piece of legislation that eliminates rent control. It does. Make no mistake about it, this bill is the end of rent control. This bill is an open door, it's carte blanche for development landlords to hike rents, to jack up rents, to be as usurious as their conscience permits them. The problem is that there isn't a whole lot of conscience among the developer industry; there simply isn't. They're out there to gouge as thoroughly as they can.

Talk to the tenants who suffer under their regime, and you'll understand exactly what I'm saying. Go into some of those apartments, as often as not the high-rises, as often as not 10, 15, maybe 20 years old, that have fallen into disrepair because the landlord quite simply can circumvent the law and maximize profits at the expense of quality of life for families, for seniors, for children, who in many parts of this province are finding it increasingly difficult to find affordable housing.

As I say, Bob Wood, the member for London South, as I'm told, with his leader, Preston Manning, doesn't consider it appropriate to pucker up for Jean Charest, who is the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. Bob Wood puckers for Preston. It was a pucker-for-Preston rally and there was Bob Wood.

Far be it from me to allege fraud. That wouldn't be appropriate, would it, Speaker, to speak of fraud on the part of government members? But I'm a little troubled, because people who voted for government members in the last election thought they were voting for Progressive Conservatives. I've got to tell you, in the Criminal Code, false pretences, fraud, deals with conduct where you present yourself as one thing but in fact you're another. I think what we've discovered is that the people of Ontario haven't been victims of a Conservative govern-

ment here in Ontario, they've been victims of a Preston Manning Reform government. My goodness.

Why didn't these people have the courage to run as Reformers if in fact they were Reformers? Why didn't they have the courage to identify themselves as what they truly were: not the heirs of the Bill Davis-Frank Miller legacy but the new little foot soldiers, arm-banded and jackbooted?

The Speaker: You did push it a little bit and then you went over the line. You can't say that. You have to withdraw it.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw jackbooted, but those Doc Martens with the different-coloured laces, the ones that come up halfway to your calf and have the cleats on the heels so that when you stomp to attention, you pound that right foot down and you can hear the click of the cleat hitting the floor. There they were, joining the troops of Preston Manning —

Mr Pouliot: Are the brown shirts back in the dry cleaners?

Mr Kormos: I wonder if some of them received the appropriate tatoos up on their biceps to show their allegiance to Preston Manning and his army of Reformers. There was Bob Wood singing the praises of —

The Speaker: I'm always interested in your speeches, but I'm really interested in hearing about the closure motion for the bill before us today.

Mr Kormos: That's why I prefaced my comments by indicating that I was acutely aware that we were debating this time allocation motion. I'm being very careful, and I appreciate your assistance and the guidance you give me in making sure that nobody would even begin to presume that I'm doing anything less than speaking to the time allocation motion, one of the most undemocratic, indeed anti-democratic, tools that could be used here. This government has done it beyond excess but at a rate and to a level that surpasses the usage of time allocation of any other government.

This, I tell you, deprives opposition members of the opportunity to raise issues, but it also deprives government members. I've got a feeling government members have been grateful for this, though, because government members really don't want to have to stand up and debate Bill 96 or, quite frankly, most of the other pieces of legislation that come from this government.

First, most of them are incapable of it. When they do speak, we hear canned, scripted speeches. You know what I'm speaking of. You can hear the fluff. It's like government backbench questions during question period, the stuff that's churned out of the communications departments of respective ministries. Mind you, it's the same garbled tomes that come from the mouths of most ministers, but it's the sort of stuff that's prepared for them, and they pucker up and do their best.

We saw what happened to backbenchers who don't. We saw what happened to the parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General. Do you recall that, Speaker? Here was the parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General on Bill 84, firefighters legislation, and he was listening to firefighters. He committed the penultimate sin in this Harris government: He was listening to firefighters. He wouldn't have advocated time allocation as is apparent in

this bill. No. He was prepared to listen and quite frankly to begin to accommodate firefighters. No, not that member. He's gone. He was fired as parliamentary assistant on the day before the final day of public hearings on Bill 84.

1740

What happened, and I'm surprised our colleague who ran as a Conservative from up Owen Sound way, from Grey-Owen Sound, Bill Murdoch — here's a person who once again made it to the 6 o'clock news sitting as a Reformer in the Reform rally audience, nodding his head in approval at the policies of Reform. I suspect that may have some currency up in Grey-Owen Sound, but I think people in Ontario had better understand we're not dealing with a government here that espouses traditional Conservative, never mind Progressive Conservative, values. We're talking about a government here that's in line with and behind their real leadership, and that's Preston Manning, Reform, and all the stuff he carries with him.

I told you, Speaker, that I was down on the picket line with workers at Vincor, on Dorchester Road in St Catharines. I was down there with John Cowan and James Wilson. John Cowan is the NDP candidate in the federal riding of Niagara Falls and James Wilson is the New Democratic Party candidate in Niagara Centre.

Mr Duncan: The polls will be open until 9:30.

Mr Kormos: Quite right. My friend from Windsor indicates the polls will be open till 9:30.

I was there with John Cowan, the New Democratic Party candidate from Niagara Falls, and with James Wilson, the New Democratic Party candidate in Niagara Centre, because they were not afraid to join me in support of working people. They understood what it means to be forced on to a picket line. They understand the evil of scabs and what it means to have scabs take away workers' jobs.

John Cowan and James Wilson understand what Bill 7 meant. They understand that Mike Harris and this government reintroduced scabs to the workplace of Ontario. They understand that until the event of Bill 7, which had little debate, which received short shrift, which opposition members were to the largest extent denied the opportunity to engage in debate on, and to participate in public hearings such that the public could be aware of the impact of Bill 7 — but it's Mike Harris's Bill 7 and his scab legislation that have created labour disputes like those by the 70-plus hardworking women and men at Vincor in Niagara Falls whose jobs have been stolen by scabs and who have to stand there and witness the tragedy and injustice of scabs hauling Brights and Vincor and Sawmill Creek wines on a daily basis out of the old Brights winery on Dorchester.

As I said earlier, I know that James Wilson and John Cowan, who stood there with me as we stood shoulder to shoulder with the working people at Vincor, understand that there's no room for scabs in Ontario and that there's no room for scab lines like Brights and Vincor and Sawmill Creek on our dining tables.

Once again, we've got a government that wants to impose its will without having —

Interjection: I thought this was landlord and tenants. Isn't this the tenant act, Peter? I'm confused here.

Mr Kormos: I'm talking about Bill 96 and the time allocation motion. We've got a government that simply wants to impose its will. There's nothing magical about having been here for 20 years or 25 years as Floyd Laughren has, and as Jim Bradley has from the Liberal caucus. But people who have been here more than a mere two years understand that what goes around comes around. I'm going to tell you, this assault on democracy is going to have a huge payback for huge numbers of the Tory backbenchers. How can it be that not one of them would stand up today and condemn or reject this time allocation motion? How can it be that not one Tory backbencher hasn't got the gumption or the guts to stand up and say, "No, I was elected to the provincial Parliament prepared to debate, understanding that good legislation can take some time to develop, understanding that the opposition has an important function"?

Why is it that one government backbencher won't stand up with the courage and the integrity to say that time allocation, after a mere — what was it? How many days of debate on Bill 96, which is going to impact on so many people and so many families? A mere three afternoons. The number of speakers who were able to speak in the course of a mere three afternoons — we're talking about two and a half, maybe three hours in an afternoon, three hours if you're lucky. You're talking about less than 10 hours of debate, which means at the end of the day fewer than 20 members, out of a Parliament of 130, having a chance to represent their constituents' views.

I'm getting, and have had for some time, the distinct impression that this government doesn't give a tinker's dam about democracy or about representation by members of the Legislative Assembly. To illustrate that is their increased and ever-present reliance on time allocation. They don't want to see the debate. Just today yet another motion was tabled with the Clerk seeking time allocation on Bill 57, a bill that has great significance for the province's environment. Once again this government has chosen to not just restrict debate but to quash it.

Look, I understand as well as anybody that matters can't be debated on and on and on as we go around in circles. I understand that. Right now, this government knows that there are 30-minute restrictions on the length of time that any member can speak. I didn't support that but I'm prepared to accept that that's the rule of the House, a mere 30 minutes to each member. With the significant restriction on the period of time that any member is permitted to address a given issue, surely as many members as possible should be accommodated. I tell you that time allocation motions like this one, as it is addressing Bill 96 — and Bill 96, once again let's make this clear, eliminates rent control in Ontario. Rent control is gone. The phoney argument —

Mr Bradley: Zap, zap.

Mr Kormos: It's zapped, it's gone. As Mr Marchese would say, it's yet whacked by this government.

The argument that somehow eliminating rent control is going to generate new development strikes one as being downright dumb and stupid. The fact is that this government and its developer friends know that new units don't have any rent control imposed on them in terms of what

the base rent is going to be. This bill has nothing to do with generating new building. This rent control elimination bill has everything to do with permitting developers to make bigger and bigger profits out of shabbier and shoddier and more run-down huge apartment complexes.

The minister speaks of the urgency for public hearings. It would have been far more interesting for this minister to have devoted some time to listening to tenants and the pain that tenants endure with greedy and voracious landlords, especially in the high-rise and development industry, before this minister even presented this bill to the House. You're left, then, with mere speculation about what would prompt the bill.

Well, I've got no difficulty with that. Clearly this government has taken sides. It's on the side of the big developers. Why, it's so deep in their back pockets that it's spitting out lint. No two ways about it. I'm not sure this government is owned by the development industry, but they've certainly taken out a lease on it for a period of a few years. This government is prepared to sacrifice the welfare of families and their children and retirees across the province in order to repay its debt, in order to do the bidding of its wealthy, corporate and very big developer friends.

I'm looking for one caucus member in the Conservative Party, and again, I understand that notwithstanding what their House leader had to say about today being a working day — you heard his arguments about why the House couldn't suspend its sitting today and instead use Friday as a makeup day in view of the fact that this House hasn't sat on a federal election day since 1874.

1750

We New Democrats are proud of our federal party. We're proud of our leader, Alexa McDonough. We're eager to be back in our communities, and some of our members are today. Those members for whom the travel, after the House closes at 6 o'clock, would have simply made it impossible to get back are already in their ridings. The Toronto members and myself — I'm going to be travelling down to Niagara at 6 o'clock — are eager to participate in our ridings as New Democrats and in company with our federal candidates as counterparts.

Was there a motive in us asking for the House not to sit on Monday? Yes, because we're proud of our party's tradition and our party's leadership and we were eager to participate with other New Democrats, engaging in the democratic process in our own communities, helping to get the vote out, any number of things that people who are interested in the political process do on an election day. So were the Liberals, quite frankly.

We know a few of the Liberals aren't here today. Those who are coming from long distances, those from the north, are back there, I have no doubt. Some, I know, are working for NDP candidates but most, by and large, are working for their Liberal federal counterparts. I've spoken to some who indicated a strong interest in the NDP federal candidates because they feel that their party, the Jean Chrétien Liberal Party, has abandoned traditional Liberal values.

It's interesting that we get confronted today, knowing there's a time allocation motion, by yet more rule

changes, rule changes that are designed to silence, to gag, not just opposition members but the government's own backbenchers. Make no mistake about that. Time allocation motions are as dangerous to government backbenchers as are the rule changes that were announced this morning. It's very clear that the government very consciously chose this day, federal election day, when they knew that attention, quite rightly, would be distracted, diverted to the federal election.

I mentioned that a whole lot of New Democrats aren't here today. These are people whose home ridings are too far away from Toronto for them to get back after 6 o'clock to work in the election campaigns of their federal counterparts, just like a whole lot of Liberals' ridings are. I'm not singling any person out, but you saw during question period. The cameras demonstrated how few members of cabinet were here and how few backbenchers were here from the Tory caucus. You see, I'm confident New Democrats are out working for New Democratic Party campaigns. Liberals are out working for Liberal Party campaigns. It seems that the Tory members who are here don't have a strong enough Reform campaign or candidate in their riding to warrant pulling the vote for that candidate today. Bill Murdoch, I'm sure, is out campaigning for his Reform counterpart. Do I deny somebody the right to belong to the Reform Party? Of course not.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: We're getting to the time allocation, but I tell you, we know that these Tory backbenchers who ran as Conservatives and who were elected as Conservatives have always been Reformers and they bring to this Legislature with them all of the things the Reform Party stands for; not just some of the things but all of the things the Reform Party stands for: the anti-worker agenda, the anti-woman agenda, the anti-ethnic agenda, the agenda which questions whether somebody from Quebec is good enough to be the Prime Minister of the country.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Don't shoot the messenger. It's the Reform Party that has that very much as part and parcel of their agenda. Quite frankly, I find it repugnant that any Canadian could question whether a Quebecker should be denied the right to present himself or herself for election as Prime Minister by virtue of the fact that he or she is from Quebec.

Mr Bradley: Where do they stand on pensions?

Mr Kormos: On pensions, you see, they talk a big game. As a matter of fact what's interesting is, just like with this time allocation motion, which I suggest to you is being misrepresented — the time allocation motion is being misrepresented; I'm very careful in the language I choose — Reform and Tories talk a big game about pensions and fiscal restraint, but by God they can trough as good as the best of them. I'm talking about full-fledged porking. You know exactly what I'm talking about. The porcinosity of Tory-Reform troughing is unparalleled.

What did this government do? One of the first things it did after taking office was bring scabs back into Ontario so they could steal workers' jobs. Then it slashed

the benefits of the poorest people in our society to the tune of 22%. Then they gave themselves raises here in the Legislative Assembly of anywhere from \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year, calling it pension reform. Let me tell you, this government is consistent.

Mr Pouliot: It's 6 of the clock.

Mr Kormos: At the same time as it brought scabs back into the province, at the same time as it slashed the poorest people's incomes by 22%, they gave themselves raises of \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year and spoke of themselves as somehow engaging in fiscal restraint.

Mr Pouliot: Stick to the motion.

Mr Kormos: That's exactly what happened, and it quite frankly happened in that exact order. These guys can trough with the best of them, let me tell you. They're prepared to do it on the backs of the poorest, the weakest. They're prepared to do it on the backs of tenants. As real wages drop in Mike Harris's Ontario — and they do — at the same time as unemployment increases in Mike Harris's Ontario — and it is — these people continue to attack the weakest and the most vulnerable.

The Speaker: I don't want to confuse you. We go by that clock. You still have three and a half minutes.

Mr Kormos: I appreciate that because there's one more thing I wanted to say. We've got a government here that's going to pay off its rich friends with a tax break, where 90% of all the tax break is going to go to 10% of the wealthiest people in this province. I'm sure it makes Conrad Black ecstatic, Tubby, as he buys up more and more of Ontario's independent and small-town newspapers, turning them into his personal broadsheets. I'm sure Conrad Black is ecstatic.

But I tell you, for this government to talk about a tax break for the wealthiest, and when it's going to borrow \$22 billion more added to the province's debt to pay for that tax break in addition to all the cutting and slashing, and when it's going to meet its real electoral obligations — not electoral obligations to the people of Ontario, not electoral obligations to the working people or retirees or kids or seniors — when it's going to repay its debt to its developer friends by killing rent controls, this government has shown its true colours. Listen, friends, Preston Manning would be proud of you. Killing rent control, I'm sure, gives him a smile and a pleasure that's hard to replicate.

I'm opposed to the time allocation motion. It's a frontal attack on democracy. Government backbenchers should show some guts and oppose it as well. Government backbenchers who think that somehow merely going along — I'm being encouraged to go on. I appreciate the support and I could go on, as you well know, and I'd love to go on, but we do want to get back to our ridings, because the polls are open till 9:30. I know James Wilson is out there pulling in the vote in Welland, John Cowan in Niagara Falls. Ed Gould up in St Catharines, the NDP candidate, has been working hard talking about working people, as he has through the course of the campaign.

The Speaker: I appreciate the fact they're all hardworking people, but this is a time allocation motion. You have a minute and 15 seconds left. Maybe we could finish in a flurry and talk about that.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. Ed Gould up in St Catharines, Willem Hanrath down in Erie-Lincoln, all of them committed to working people, committed to tenants. One of the things they asked me to say today is that they join with New Democrats here at Queen's Park in fighting a right-wing agenda that would place the poorest and the sickest and the weakest in our society under direct attack. It would sacrifice them, would serve them up to the wealthy multinational corporate world. Bill 96 is part and parcel of that overall scheme.

Bill 96 is going to kill rent control. It's going to insert brand-new, unknown-to-Ontario levels of discrimination on the part of landlords picking and choosing prospective tenants. You heard from other speakers and you heard during question period from both the official opposition and the New Democratic Party caucus our concern, shared by the head of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, who condemns this legislation for its discriminatory quality.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Mr Leach has moved government notice of motion 21. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. It will be a 15-minute bell.

The House recessed from 1801 to 1816.

The Speaker: Order. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Barrett, Toby	Johns, Helen	Parker, John L.
Bassett, Isabel	Johnson, David	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Beaubien, Marcel	Jordan, W. Leo	Ross, Lillian
Boushy, Dave	Kells, Morley	Shea, Derwyn
Brown, Jim	Klees, Frank	Smith, Bruce
Chudleigh, Ted	Leach, Al	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Leadston, Gary L.	Stewart, R. Gary
Danford, Harry	Marland, Margaret	Tsubouchi, David H.
Doyle, Ed	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Froese, Tom	Maves, Bart	Vankoughnet, Bill
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Villeneuve, Noble
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Grimmett, Bill	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Young, Terence H.
Jackson, Cameron	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bradley, James J.	Kormos, Peter	Morin, Gilles E.
Duncan, Dwight	Lankin, Frances	Pouliot, Gilles

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1819.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic	Hamilton East / -Est	L	
Arnott, Ted	Wellington	PC	parliamentary assistant (small business) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur petites entreprises) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Baird, John R.	Nepean	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire du président du Conseil de gestion
Barrett, Toby	Norfolk	PC	
Bartolucci, Rick	Sudbury	L	
Bassett, Isabel	St Andrew-St Patrick	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, deputy government House leader / adjointe parlementaire du ministre des Finances, chef parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Beaubien, Marcel	Lambton	PC	
Bisson, Gilles	Cochrane South / -Sud	ND	deputy New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Boushy, Dave	Sarnia	PC	
Boyd, Marion	London Centre / -Centre	ND	
Bradley, James J.	St Catharines	L	deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Brown, Jim	Scarborough West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Services correctionnels
Brown, Michael A.	Algoma-Manitoulin	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Carr, Gary	Oakville South / -Sud	PC	
Carroll, Jack	Chatham-Kent	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Castrilli, Annamarie	Downsview	L	
Chiarelli, Robert	Ottawa West / -Ouest	L	
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	ND	
Chudleigh, Ted	Halton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn	Riverdale	ND	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Cleary, John C.	Cornwall	L	
Clement, Tony	Brampton South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire du premier ministre
Colle, Mike	Oakwood	L	
Conway, Sean G.	Renfrew North / -Nord	L	
Cordiano, Joseph	Lawrence	L	
Crozier, Bruce	Essex South / -Sud	L	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne	London North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin	Scarborough North / -Nord	L	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Danford, Harry	Hastings-Peterborough	PC	parliamentary assistant (agriculture and food) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteurs Agriculture et Alimentation) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
DeFaria, Carl	Mississauga East / -Est	PC	
Doyle, Ed	Wentworth East / -Est	PC	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Dwight	Windsor-Walkerville	L	
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet	Durham West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Elliott, Brenda	Guelph	PC	
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L.	Parry Sound	PC	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Fisher, Barbara	Bruce	PC	parliamentary assistant (rural affairs) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Affaires rurales) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Flaherty, Jim	Durham Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire du procureur général
Ford, Douglas B.	Etobicoke-Humber	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Fox, Gary	Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox-Hastings-Sud	PC	
Froese, Tom	St Catharines-Brock	PC	parliamentary assistant (colleges and universities) to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire (secteur collèges et universités) du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Galt, Doug	Northumberland	PC	parliamentary assistant (environment) to the Minister of Environment and Energy / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Environnement) de la ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie
Gerretsen, John	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	L	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Gilchrist, Steve	Scarborough East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant (municipal affairs – urban) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur urbain) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Grandmaître, Bernard	Ottawa East / -Est	L	
Gravelle, Michael	Port Arthur	L	
Grimmett, Bill	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjointe parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ottawa-Rideau	PC	
Hampton, Howard	Rainy River	ND	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie	Oxford	PC	parliamentary assistant (municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles	Willowdale	PC	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.	Nipissing	PC	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John	Etobicoke-Rexdale	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris	Victoria-Haliburton	PC	Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hoy, Pat	Essex-Kent	L	
Hudak, Tim	Niagara South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Santé
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron	Burlington South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Johns, Helen	Huron	PC	parliamentary assistant (energy) to the Minister of Environment and Energy / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Énergie) de la ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie
Johnson, Bert	Perth	PC	
Johnson, Hon / L'hon David	Don Mills	PC	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Johnson, Ron	Brantford	PC	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, government House leader / président du Conseil de gestion, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Jordan, W. Leo	Lanark-Renfrew	PC	parliamentary assistant (tourism) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Tourisme) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Kells, Morley	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	PC	
Kennedy, Gerard	York South / -Sud	L	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Klees, Frank	York-Mackenzie	PC	
Kormos, Peter	Welland-Thorold	ND	chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kwinter, Monte	Wilson Heights	L	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	L	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Lankin, Frances	Beaches-Woodbine	ND	
Laughren, Floyd	Nickel Belt	ND	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Leach, Hon / L'hon Al	St George-St David	PC	
Leadston, Gary L.	Kitchener-Wilmot	PC	deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Marchese, Rosario	Fort York	ND	
Marland, Margaret	Mississauga South / -Sud	PC	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président de la Chambre et Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Martel, Shelley	Sudbury East / -Est	ND	
Martin, Tony	Sault Ste Marie	ND	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Martiniuk, Gerry	Cambridge	PC	
Maves, Bart	Niagara Falls	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de la Santé
McGuinty, Dalton	Ottawa South / -Sud	L	
McLean, Allan K.	Simcoe East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
McLeod, Lyn	Fort William	L	
Miclash, Frank	Kenora	L	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Morin, Gilles E.	Carleton East / -Est	L	
Munro, Julia	Durham-York	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Murdoch, Bill	Grey-Owen Sound	PC	
Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn	Scarborough-Ellesmere	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Newman, Dan	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	PC	
North, Peter	Elgin	Ind	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
O'Toole, John R.	Durham East / -Est	PC	
Ouellette, Jerry J.	Oshawa	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al	York Centre / -Centre	PC	
Parker, John L.	York East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Patten, Richard	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	L	
Pettit, Trevor	Hamilton Mountain	PC	

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Phillips, Gerry	Scarborough-Agincourt	L	
Pouliot, Gilles	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	ND	
Preston, Peter L.	Brant-Haldimand	PC	
Pupatello, Sandra	Windsor-Sandwich	L	
Ramsay, David	Timiskaming	L	
Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Quinte	PC	
Ross, Lillian	Hamilton West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.	Leeds-Grenville	PC	Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Ruprecht, Tony	Parkdale	L	
Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob	Mississauga West / -Ouest	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William	Eglinton	PC	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Sergio, Mario	Yorkview	L	
Shea, Derwyn	High Park-Swansea	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Sheehan, Frank	Lincoln	PC	
Silipo, Tony	Dovercourt	ND	deputy New Democratic Party leader / chef adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Skarica, Toni	Wentworth North / -Nord	PC	
Smith, Bruce	Middlesex	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John	Mississauga North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Spina, Joseph	Brampton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.	Carleton	PC	Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie
Stewart, R. Gary	Peterborough	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris	Etobicoke West / -Ouest	PC	Speaker / Président
Tascona, Joseph N.	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	PC	
Tilson, David	Dufferin-Peel	PC	
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.	Markham	PC	Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Turnbull, David	York Mills	PC	chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement
Vankoughnet, Bill	Frontenac-Addington	PC	
Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble	S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	PC	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Wettlaufer, Wayne	Kitchener	PC	
Wildman, Bud	Algoma	ND	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim	Simcoe West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth	Waterloo North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Wood, Bob	London South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General / adjoint parlementaire du solliciteur général
Wood, Len	Cochrane North / -Nord	ND	
Young, Terence H.	Halton Centre / -Centre	PC	
Vacant	Windsor-Riverside		
Vacant	Oriole		

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